

makeover magic

Savvy ideas and style tricks to make your outdoor area look – not cost – a million dollars

WORDS KYLIE JACKES

IF YOUR BACKYARD is looking a little unruly, summer is the perfect time to spruce it up with a new look. We've rounded up expert tips and inspiration – from quick facelifts to more permanent upgrades – to help you create a lush retreat on any budget. >

No-money makeovers

Smart style fixes that don't cost a cent



REMOVE, REPOT AND PRUNE To refresh your garden without spending a dollar, Peta Donaldson of Natural Design suggests removing old plants that may detract from the space's overall aesthetic. "Over time, pot plants can become root-bound, so transplant these into larger pots and replace the old soil with quality potting mix," she says. "Prune and reshape existing shrubs to encourage a flush of new growth."

UPCYCLE MATERIALS Use what you already own for a fast and fabulous fix. "Artfully positioned mirrors reflect the view, while a lobster pot converted into a hanging basket adds interest," says Steve Warner of Outhouse Design. "For a Mediterranean look, fill old olive oil tins with edible herbs or annuals and group them for contrasting colour and texture," recommends Carolyn Blackman of Vivid Design. Alternatively, place pots in baskets for a heritage cottage look (below).



CLEAN UP Simple maintenance is a good place to start when looking to enhance your garden. "Raking leaves, removing weeds and pressure-cleaning decks can make a big difference," advises Ellen St Ruth of Nathan Burkett Design. Check ads on Gumtree or in the local press for free mulch to keep garden beds moist and weeds in check, but be aware it's unlikely to be the same quality (or as weed free) as the conventional, bought variety.



PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE) JAMES GREER, (THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT) WEDENDAHVIGE/IDECOR IMAGES, (TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM LEFT) JOHN PAUL URIZAR, (BOTTOM RIGHT) NICK WATT



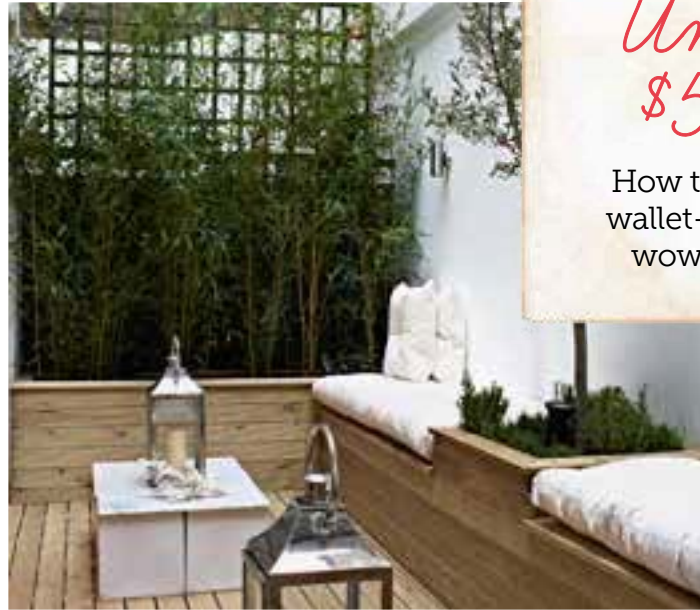
LINE UP YOUR LAWN A lush lawn creates instant impact, so a quick mow can do wonders for a tired-looking yard. Note that each grass variety comes with different specifications – namely how often you should mow it and its ideal height. For a polished finish, use a manual edging tool to dig a neat channel around beds, as pictured left.

DIVIDE & CONQUER Look around your garden for clumping plants you could divide and replant, or that you could propagate easily. Hardy species such as succulents, baby's tears (both pictured below), and agaves can be easily transplanted, while dracaenas and yuccas can strike from a single stem. "Ask local landscapers if they have unwanted plants or pots from current projects," suggests Richard Rimell of Quercus Gardens. "Also keep an eye online and on classifieds for giveaways." >



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REFRESH THE FENCE

"Shrubs will create a great green screen, yet as they can take several years to mature, it's also worthwhile to paint fences in a colour that is dark and rich, such as Murobond Dark Night," recommends Matt Leacy of Landart. "The benefit of darker tones is that they visually recede the fence, conceal imperfections and help make the greenery pop." If you're repainting a large area, consider investing in a paint sprayer, which can make light work of a big job.

LIGHT UP "Rather than flood the garden with light, illuminate features, such as a tree, and conceal the light source," advises Matt Coates of A Better Life Outside. Achieve this effect with 'Select A' ground-mounted spotlights (\$25 each) from Masters. Solar-powered outdoor fairy lights will also give a fence a lift or highlight a shrub.



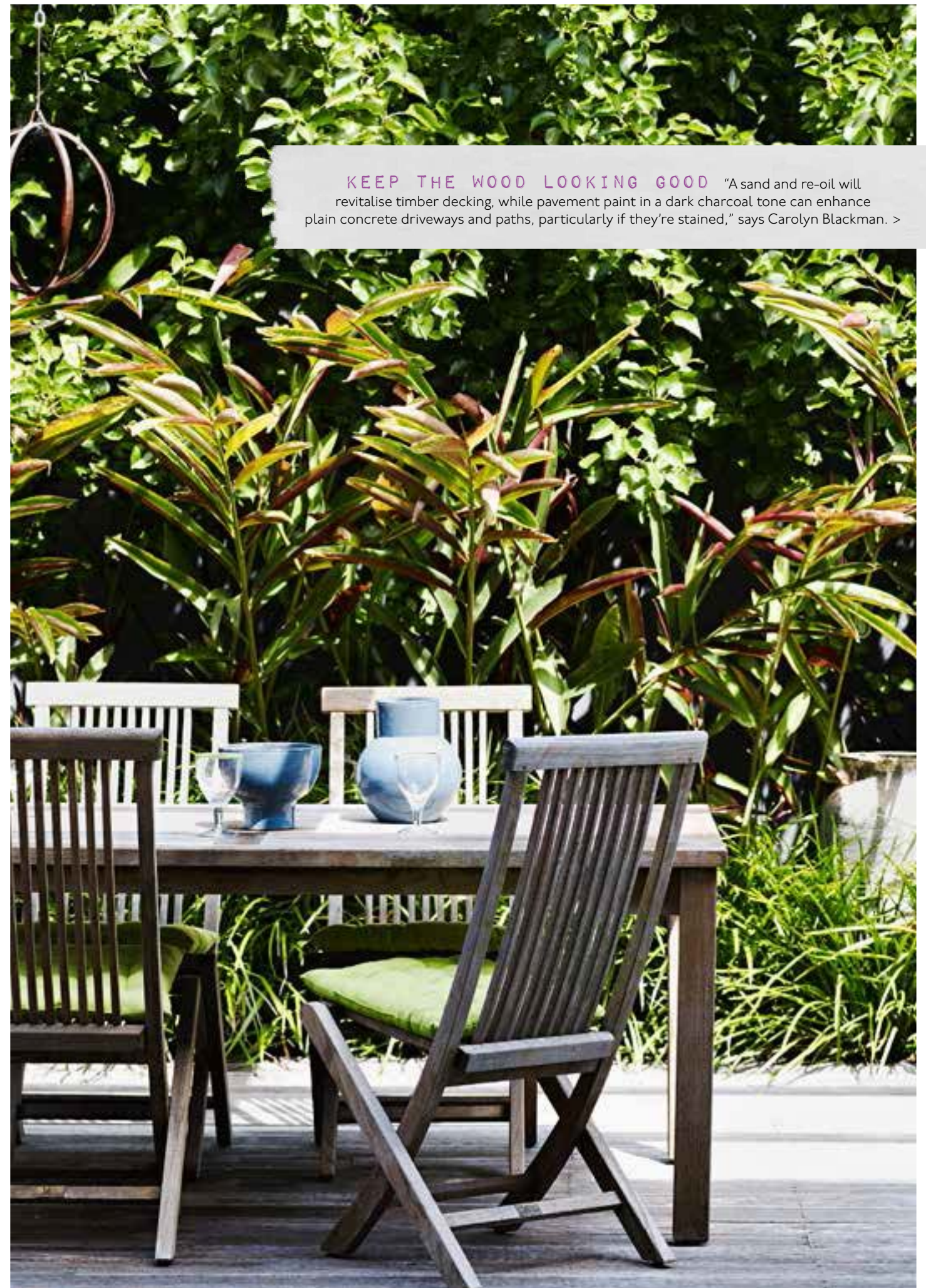
PICK A PRETTY POT "Select pots in neutral colours that won't date, and others that add interest with shape, texture and scale," suggests Adam Robinson of Adam Robinson Design. "Succulents such as agaves [left], crassulas and kalanchoes potted singly or en masse create great impact, require minimal maintenance and are fast growing."

UPDATE SOFT FURNISHINGS

"Outdoor areas don't get used if there's nowhere comfortable to sit, so soften timber seats with large cushions and beanbags made from quality outdoor fabric," advises Matt Leacy. "Adding shade with a market umbrella will also encourage you to make the most of outdoor spaces year round." Try Coolaroo for high quality umbrellas in a range of styles, from \$109 each at Bunnings.

PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT) GAB INTERIORS/NICKY CARTER, (TOP RIGHT) NATALIE HUNTER/AY, (BOTTOM LEFT) MIKKEL VANG, (BOTTOM RIGHT) & OPPOSITE) DEREK SWALWELL

KEEP THE WOOD LOOKING GOOD "A sand and re-oil will revitalise timber decking, while pavement paint in a dark charcoal tone can enhance plain concrete driveways and paths, particularly if they're stained," says Carolyn Blackman. >



outdoors {easy updates}

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ADD FINE FOLIAGE

A feature tree or a series of smaller ones will bring years of pleasure. "When picking a tree, find a variety that suits your climate, soil type and space," says Steve Warner of Outside Design. "To ensure it becomes the focal point, position it for maximum impact and design your landscaping around it." >

outdoors {easy updates}



CREATE A PRISTINE PATH

Shady, uninviting thoroughfares alongside the house can be transformed with large-format pavers in neutral tones. “Bluestone organic steppers are an excellent way to introduce a natural design element to your outdoor area,” says Katie Rowley from Eco Outdoor. Frame them with plants that look tidy and are easy to trim, such as lomandra, ginger, clivia and lirioppe.

TURN UP THE HEAT A firepit, such as the ‘Brad’ from Robert Plumb (\$1100, above right), acts as a centrepiece for a cosy outdoor room. If a wood-burner doesn’t appeal, a clean-burning bioethanol fireplace from Ecosmart Fire may be for you, says Peta Donaldson. “They produce clean-burning warmth and a wonderful ambient light.”



“A TALL DECORATIVE FENCE CAN *enhance* YOUR PRIVACY”
~ PETA DONALDSON, NATURAL DESIGN



USE SAVVY SCREENING To give your garden a lovely textural element – while blocking out unwanted views – opt for a rustic-looking timber fence or bamboo screening. Also try Lump Sculpture Studio for some truly stand-out decorative screens, including laser-cut steel designs.

GO SKY HIGH

A vertical garden (as pictured, left) works particularly well in small courtyards and compact balconies, says Matt Coates. “Budget about \$700 for plants, soil and several interconnecting green wall kits that you can install yourself,” he says. Try Holmans ‘Green Wall’ vertical garden kit, \$69, Bunnings. >

outdoors {easy updates}

Style to splurge on

Big-ticket ideas and overhauls to last a lifetime



COOK ALFRESCO An outdoor kitchen is an investment in lifestyle – as well as in your property – says Anthony Pillinger of Swell Homes, who built this custom kitchen with landscape designer Liz Prater. “If you’re on a budget, consider a prefabricated unit, such as the Matador ‘Entertainer’ 6-burner outdoor kitchen, which offers a big bang for just \$2199,” suggests Matt Coates.



BUILD A DECK

If you entertain a lot, create a dedicated deck area for an outdoor dining or lounge setting. Position this area close to the home for easy access and select weather-resistant hardware and materials.




INVEST IN QUALITY FURNITURE

For a space built to last, replace tired pieces with stylish and durable designs.

“Quality furniture can withstand the outdoors,” says Katie Rowley. “Look for tables and chairs made from teak or premium-grade stainless steel, and opt for quick-dry foam cushion inners that resist mildew and mould.”



EMBRACE HARDSCAPING

“A timber structure to support evergreen climbers, such as star jasmine or solandra, makes a wonderful impact, dappled shade and a lush backdrop in a compact corner,” says Carolyn Blackman. “And if you’re handy, building a small pergola or garden arbour can add interest and a sense of division between outdoor areas.” 

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