

Backyard landscaping ideas on a budget

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Landscaping your garden can be a great way to improve your outdoor space and add value to your home. If you're not careful though, all the little things you want to do can pile up, and the cost of doing so can get away from you very quickly. Materials, plants, and tradesmen can turn that little weekend project into a massive hit to the wallet. But it doesn't have to be this way! Here are some tips to help you landscape your backyard on a budget.

Figure out what you want, set a budget and prioritise jobs.

As it is in life, what you want, and what you need are two very different things when landscaping your backyard. Sure, that majestic marble water feature might look great, but if you can't justify the price tag, then don't do it.

You need to figure out the purpose of your landscaped area. What are you going to use it for? Home produce? Entertaining? A haven for the little ones? Each landscape style will call for certain purchases. When you know the purpose, you'll know what you need.

This then flows into the consideration of the theme of your garden. Theme will dictate what style of things you need to purchase. Lets go back to the majestic marble water feature, is that really going to fit in a minimalist eco-friendly home orchid? Nope, so then don't waste your money on it, even if it is the best thing you've ever seen.

Figuring out exactly what you want done in your backyard is the first step to saving money. When you know what you want done and where you want it, you can set your budget. This means you can do away with all the little add-ons and impulse buys that slowly chip away at the bank account.

When you know what you want, and your budget is set, it's time to prioritise the jobs. Breaking the landscaping down into the little tasks is a great way to tackle the bigger picture. It's important to think about the order things will be done first off. Hard landscaping is usually the first thing to be done. This involves paving, retaining walls, building beds, timber structures etc. These are the things that don't have any plant life involved in their completion. The reason we do these first is so that all the heavy equipment and material needed doesn't damage our new plants or turf. It's pretty common sense stuff, but can save you a load of time and money by saving the hassle of having to re-do all your softscaping.

The next thing to consider when prirotising is what is most important to achieve your desires. These are the things that are must haves in your new backyard. Doing these things first means that if you go over budget, you don't have to find more money down the track to get what you want. It also allows you to stagger the works over a period of time, so you can get the vitals done with the cash you have, and save the minor stuff to later down the track when you get a work bonus or a good tax return.

Get lots of quotes.

When it comes to landscaping your backyard, unless you're a full blown DIY hero, you're probably going to need help with the heavy lifting. There's no shame in this, even us professionals sub-contract work out when we need help. There is shame however in not shopping around!

Call around to a bunch of different local tradesmen and ask them to come out for a quote. Landscapers will be your first port of call obviously, but don't stop there. Builders, concreters, bricklayers and pavers may be able to do some of the jobs you need done that are specific to their trade. General maintenance gardeners may also even offer planting and turfing services. It may seem easier to have just the one jack of all trades on site doing it all, but we're about saving money here, and this is a great way to start.

If you've got the time, then call around multiples of each trade type. You'll probably find a general average price for the work you want done, and you can use this as negotiation with your favourite. Be careful though of anyone offering super cheap works. You definitely get what you pay for here.

Time of year

Landscaping does have busy periods like any other business. Spring and Summer (getting everything ready for the busy public holiday periods) are the boom times, with demand for tradesmen being really high. When everyone is asking for work, tradesmen can pick and choose jobs that are going to make them more money, and may even charge a little higher rate, because they know the demand is there.

If you can, consider holding off on getting a quote until autumn or winter. As the work slows and demand drops, tradesmen may take a cheaper project to keep the income flowing.

Do things yourself or with friends.

It may seem daunting, but there's actually a lot of backyard landscaping jobs you can do yourself, or with some friends. It's a really rewarding activity, and it's a great way to save money. Unless you know what you're doing, I'd suggest steering clear of the hard landscaping, but things like digging holes or trenches, painting, mulching, planting plants and trees, or [laying turf](#) are relatively easy. Get some mates around and throw a BBQ for anyone that gives you a days work.

You can save yourself loads of money in labour time, and get large jobs done quickly.

Get things for free or cheap.

Plants, pots, sculpures and materials can be really expensive to buy new, but there's a few ways you can cut the costs associated with these and even get them for free.

For plants, you can get cuttings or divided clumps from friends or family gardens. These can be transplanted into your new garden for virtually nothing. Most plants can be propagated by cuttings, but you may need to use some root hormone gel that you can pick up from any nursery or warehouse store. Also have a look around at local markets, or council give aways for cheap or free plants. Local independent nurseries are another great options.

Lots of these places will do some pretty sweet deals on bulk purchases to keep afloat. Wholesale nurseries will also be considerably cheaper to buy from. It might mean taking a bit of a drive out of town, but cut out the middleman and save some money!

Pots and sculptures can be found at second hand stores, on online classified websites, and even on the side of the road. Don't be afraid to recycle someone elses unwanted stuff if it saves you money! Materials are a bit tougher to find cheap, but you can save some cash if you can source what you need. Try some local tree loppers, or council arborists and see if they sell their chip mulch cheap (some even give it away!). Be wary of what they've chipped though, it may contain weed species seeds, or nasty nutirent absorbing species like camphour laurel, that will destroy your soil.

You can also save some coin by using cheap clean fill to bulk up garden beds, or as a turf underaly, as opposed to expenisve humus or sand/soil blends. Even rocks around your old yard can be used as features, or if you've got enough, make a nice rock wall.

Old recycled timber is another great option to save some money. You can use old timber like railway sleepers, recycled decking timber, offcuts, or tree branches for things like garden beds, decks, or features in your garden.

Think outside the box.

Feature objects in a landscaped backyard are a must. They draw the eye of the visitor to a point in the garden, allowing you to control their view and experiences. Correct landscape design will focus the best aspects of the garden around these feature objects, or on the route to them. Whether it be a smell, a noise, or leading the visitor around a corner to a surprise garden full of flowering blossoms. Essentially it makes the feature object, not the feature at all. So obviously, these are pretty darn important to a great landscaped backyard, but how can you do such magic on a tight budget? Get creative, that's how! Think about using junk as a feature.

An unexpected garden object can be just as enticing as an amazing sculpture or water feature. A collection of old glass wine bottles in a spray painted plastic pot with a simple little fish tank filter can be used to make a cute little water feature. Big rocks in a flat garden stand out like a sore thumb. A hidden table and chair setting under a tree, or an old broken tyre swing. Filling things like wheel barrows, old urns or vases with cascading flowers, or even an old pair of work boots with some veggies growing out of them. Anything that catches the eye will work. Use these options and save money on buying items.

Hopefully, by following all these tips and tricks, when it comes time to landscaping your backyard you'll get an amazing, rewarding, and practical outcome, without breaking the bank.