

backyard bliss

With a little bit of DIY style,
Anya Brighthouse turns her
back garden into an outdoor
room for summer entertaining.





Right: I even a mosquito net hut with strips on ribbon. Below: tea lights in a jar make perfect lanterns.



Use a mosquito net to create a quick and easy hut.



I have always liked the classic lines of the cape cod chairs and there seem to be a lot around for this summer. Ezibuy has done a great version that folds up. Republic Range from The Warehouse has done a beautiful blue version. The white ones in our shoot came from The Warehouse.

To further the feeling of an 'outdoor room', I wanted to include some lighting so we could use it in the evening as well. I was a bit stumped until I thought about using some old agee jars with tea lights inside as hanging lanterns. I used the idea for a wedding in the spring and I still had the jars around the house. I got my husband to put hooks into the pergola and we hang them up at night.

Huts were one of my favourite things to make when I was little

– under the table, under the bed, under my friend's trampoline (she was the only person I knew with a trampoline). If I was really lucky, I could convince my Mother to let me take the beach umbrella out of the shed and make a hut out of it. We would peg blankets to it and the fruit trees in the garden, and make a house. This would last all day until, invariably, the wind would get under the umbrella and blow it away. This season beach umbrellas are everywhere. Ezibuy has a great one in red with white polka dots – perfect for a happy, child-friendly summer.

Another way to create a quick and easy hut is to use a mosquito net. They



We have lived in the same house for 10 years. I love the sense of continuity of being in the same house for that length of time and the fact it's the only place the children can remember calling home.

But I have come to realise the actual reason we're still here is that it is a great house, and we have learnt to be flexible with it. Ten years ago no-one really had outdoor living areas. You had a place to put the barbecue and a table and chairs. We put a pergola in over our French doors and I remember someone laughing at us – calling us very old-fashioned. But I have lovely childhood memories of wisteria growing all over a pergola in the back of our house, and it was one of the few things I was sure about when it came to the outside of our house. I am not at all green-fingered. In fact, I have an uncanny knack of killing all things organic.

I had help when we first put the garden in. I am very confident about indoor spaces, but outdoor ones used to scare me. Not so much now – I just try and think of them as outdoor rooms. Many of us have fairly large outdoor spaces – be they paved, decked or grassed. When we first moved into our house, our kids were babies and toddlers and we simply wanted good flow out of the house onto the grass so the kids could run around, and a table and chairs so we could eat as many meals outside keeping the mess in the house to a minimum. My husband became excellent at barbecues (still is) and we have wonderful memories of eating under the wisteria with family and friends.

Last year we realised now the kids are older, what we actually do at the table now is just sit, and drink tea, and talk, and read. So the idea to make two spaces outside came about. We moved the table out from under the wisteria, got ourselves a big canvas umbrella (The Warehouse have great ones), and now we have a great space under the shade where we spend a lot of our time. I even caught one of the children reading out there the other day!

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as outdoor rooms.

I turned the bench seat that used to sit around the table into a couch. It isn't the most comfortable of seats naturally, but we have added a whole lot of cushions to soften it up. The chairs around the table don't have to be matching – just durable for when they are left out during the winter, or small so they can be put away. The plastic stools came from The Warehouse and actually pull apart and stack to save space. Rather nifty and just \$14.99.



Above: A hammock is the perfect way to while away a summer afternoon.

aren't very expensive (we got ours from Bed, Bath and Beyond for \$19) and create an instant hut when hung from a tree. They are also great for inside fun during winter, when everyone is going a bit stir crazy!

When it comes to outdoor furniture, I believe hammocks are entirely underrated. We still have one my parents brought back from Brazil years ago. It gets slung on the back fence and it is a wonderful spot to escape to. I like to sneak off with a book when no one is looking. Eventually someone finds me, and the kids like to climb in for a cuddle (especially the smallest one). I love that when I am not using it for more grown up pursuits, it becomes a pirate boat or a space ship or a princess bed. However, it's worth bearing in mind that hammocks are easy for little people to fall from if the shape isn't right. The Brazilian-style hammocks work well as they have deep sides and don't have the wooden frame at the top. Make sure you don't secure them too high off the ground – it is better to have them lower with less distance to fall! Bunnings have fabulous hammock hooks for just \$14.95. Keep everyone safe and secure.

I am, if nothing else, budget-friendly (my husband may disagree about this at times), so I decided to paint some beer crates for multi-purpose outdoor furniture. With a quick paint job they become a myriad of things! They can be a stool, a coffee table, a child's table, a foot stool, or even a planter box.

Remember, they don't call it 'the great outdoors' for nothing – even if it is only your own back garden.

Wallace Cotton: Blue and white striped 'manne' cushions, \$39.90, **Cambay** cushions, \$29.90

The Warehouse: Red and white striped cushions, \$9.95 each, **Cape cod** chairs, \$99 each, Red and white striped floor pads, \$29 each, Red, black plastic stools \$14.99 each.

Harveys: Plain white cushion we painted with blue circle \$14

Ezibuy: Red and white hammock, \$29. Set of three dotted, striped and velvet cushions, \$49, Red and white polka dotted umbrella, \$49.

Briscoes: Red dotted glasses, \$4 each.

Bed Bath and Beyond: Mosquito nets, \$19 each.

Resene: Yellow stool – buddah gold, Blue crates – endomorph.