

# retaining wall rescue

Replace a damaged retaining wall in your garden using treated pine sleepers

**W**hen an old, log retaining wall around a triangle-shaped garden bed has succumbed to rot and given way, you can be left with an awful clean up, let alone an eyesore. And often, the only solution is to replace the entire wall. For low walls like this (at 400mm high), this method of using vertically stacked and painted treated pine sleepers is a suitable and attractive way of regaining control of the landscaping of your yard.



**1. Using pine sleepers in a vertical arrangement**, rather than horizontal, adds interest and makes the wall look more like garden edging.

**2. Where two wall lengths join**, simply cap the end point with an additional sleeper length.

**3. It's an all too common sight** – a collapsed retaining wall with rotted logs. It's definitely time for a replacement!

## steps



### RETAINING WALL

#### Gather your supplies

- 200 x 100 x 2400mm H4 treated pine sleepers (to suit)
- 200 x 75 x 2400mm H4 treated pine sleepers (to suit)
- 200 x 50 x 2400mm H4 treated pine sleepers (to suit)
- Outdoor paint (we used Dulux Weathershield Low Sheen in Maximus)

#### You'll also need

Heavy-duty gloves; crowbar; shovel; set-out paint; timber stakes; stringline; circular saw; safety gear; square; pencil; drill and bits; 100 and 150mm bugle head screws; spirit level; quick-set concrete; garden hose; painting tools; Nepean river gravel; garden soil; pine bark; selection of plants (optional)

**Notes** 1. Quantity of supplies will vary according to your project, adjust to suit. 2. Before you begin you may wish to book a skip bin to dispose of waste.

#### Here's how

##### Preparing site

**STEP 1** Wearing gloves, remove old retaining wall. Use a combination of crowbar and shovel to remove both horizontal and vertical logs. Discard waste.

**STEP 2** Using shovel, tidy up soil and remove any plants that may interfere with position of new wall.

**STEP 3** This garden bed is triangle-shaped, coming to a point at the front. Hammer timber stakes at each end point of position of new wall. Tie stringline to stakes then, using set-out paint, mark line of new wall on soil. Remove stringline and stakes.

**STEP 4** Dig a 400mm-deep trench along marked line on both sides of garden bed. Set excess soil aside to be re-used.

#### Making retaining wall

**STEP 5** Our new wall is made up of 800mm lengths of sleepers of various thicknesses vertically stacked and fixed together in panel lengths of 2400mm. Mark up sleepers to be used for verticals to 800mm lengths using pencil and square.

**STEP 6** Wearing safety gear and using circular saw, cut vertical sleepers to length.

**STEP 7** Lay out a dry run of vertical lengths how you would like them to appear in the panel, alternating thicknesses as you go and with ends flush. Lay long horizontal length of 200 x 50 x 2400mm sleeper over back of dry run, 200mm from top edge. From back of long sleeper and using bugle head screws, skew screw assembly together. Where necessary, have a helper hold verticals hard against long sleeper while you drive in screws. Repeat process for as many panels as necessary (here, 3 panels).

#### Installing retaining wall

**STEP 8** Having a helper assist you, carry first panel into position in trench. Panels need to be an even 400mm above and below ground level. Using spirit level, check panel is level and make any adjustments to soil if needed. Bring adjoining panel into position and butt against first panel. Check for level and adjust, if needed.

**STEP 9** To join panels, cut and screw a 200 x 50 x 800mm length of sleeper across the join of long sleepers at back. You may need to tip the panels forward a little in order to fit your drill in position.

**STEP 10** Stand assembly upright and, using spirit level, make any necessary adjustments so it sits level and plumb.



# steps

## Not every garden is a level playing field, so get your contours working for you with a new retaining wall

**STEP 11** On outside of assembly, temporarily prop offcuts of sleeper at a 45° angle to ground level to hold assembly upright.

**STEP 12** Repeat Steps 8-11 to position wall on other side of garden bed.

**STEP 13** To cap an end point where 2 walls come together, slot an extra 800mm-long sleeper in position and, from outside of wall, drive in 2 screws at top and 2 at bottom to fix in place.

**STEP 14** To reinforce end point, mark and cut an offcut of sleeper to fit. From top of offcut, drive screws into long sleepers to hold in position.

**STEP 15** Following product instructions, shovel dry quick-set concrete into trench on inside and outside of wall. Using shovel, disperse concrete evenly in trench.

### STOCKISTS

Horticultural-grade pine bark mulch; Nepean river gravel; garden soil, **Australian Native Landscapes 13 14 58, [anscape.com.au](http://anscape.com.au)** H4 treated pine sleepers and hardware supplies, **Bunnings Warehouse (03) 8831 9777, [bunnings.com.au](http://bunnings.com.au)** Waste removal, **DATS Skip Bins 1300 654 334** Weathershield Low Sheen in Maximus, **Dulux 13 25 25, [dulux.com.au](http://dulux.com.au)**

**STEP 16** Following product instructions, use garden hose to spray and wet concrete. Using shovel, mix concrete with water to ensure correct consistency. Hose any splatters of concrete off wall. Allow to set.





**STEP 17** Backfill area behind wall using reserved soil. Also fill trench at front of wall. Spread a layer of garden soil on top. Plant or replant garden bed as desired (see What We Planted, right) and finish with a layer of pine bark.

**STEP 18** Paint retaining wall in 2 coats of outdoor paint, allowing to dry between coats.

**STEP 19** Plant up area in front of retaining wall, if desired, then spread gravel and level off using a rake.



### WHAT WE PLANTED

 Protea	 Kangaroo paw
 Lomandra 'Tanika'	 Serruria 'Pretty 'n' Pink'

Words Gavin Kirk; photography Brent Wilson; project Troy Paschini

