Lawn-to-Border 3-Summer Calendar

Your precise schedule for a lush, no-dig perennial garden.

Turn bare grass into a thriving border without digging or weekly trimming. Follow this schedule to build, plant, and maintain your garden through its first three summers.



Key Garden Measurements

Min. 6 inches
Cardboard overlap to block grass runners

Exactly 3 inches
Compost depth over flattened cardboard

4 inches
Mow strip width using standard brick

3-year mature width
Plant tag spacing between center stems

1 inch weekly
Water during the first summer

1/3 of height
Chelsea chop ratio for tall bloomers

Exactly 2 inches
Height above crown for winter cuts

6-inch pieces
Chop & drop stem debris size

Prep Your Cardboard Carefully

Remove all packing tape, glossy labels, and staples from the cardboard before laying it down, as these will not decompose and will surface later.

Your 3-Summer Schedule

1. **Year 1: Establish Roots** Water deeply weekly and pull small weeds by hand before taproots penetrate the cardboard.
2. **Year 2: Shape, Divide** Perform the Chelsea chop in May and divide fast-growing perennials in autumn.
3. **Year 3: Closed Canopies** Stop supplemental watering entirely and switch to chop-and-drop late winter cleanup.
4. **Late Winter: Chop Debris** Cut dead material down; snip long stems into manageable pieces to lay flat.

Pruning & Cleanup Guide

Find your row: **Plant type & season**

Plant type & season	Your pick	Why
Late-summer tall bloomers	Chelsea chop in May	Forces a sturdier, branched base
Early spring bloomers	Do not prune	Avoids removing the only blooms
Single central flower spike	Do not prune	Avoids removing the only blooms
Autumn coneflowers and Susans	Leave seed heads intact	Feeds overwintering goldfinches
Winter prairie dropseed	Leave hollow stems standing	Nests native solitary bees

Check Before You Dig

- ○ Check plant tags for the estimated mature spread before spacing.
- ○ Measure your edging brick depth to dig a perfectly flush trench.
- ○ Plan odd-numbered groups of three or five for cohesive drifts.
- ○ Check level with adjacent lawn for a smooth mower rolling surface.

Garden Layout & Notes

Enjoy your vibrant, low-maintenance garden as it fills in beautifully year after year!