# The three-border garden

A planting plan and illustrated care guide for a 12 m × 9 m garden.

THE STARTING GARDEN



Open lawn with three bare edges.

AI PLANTING CONCEPT



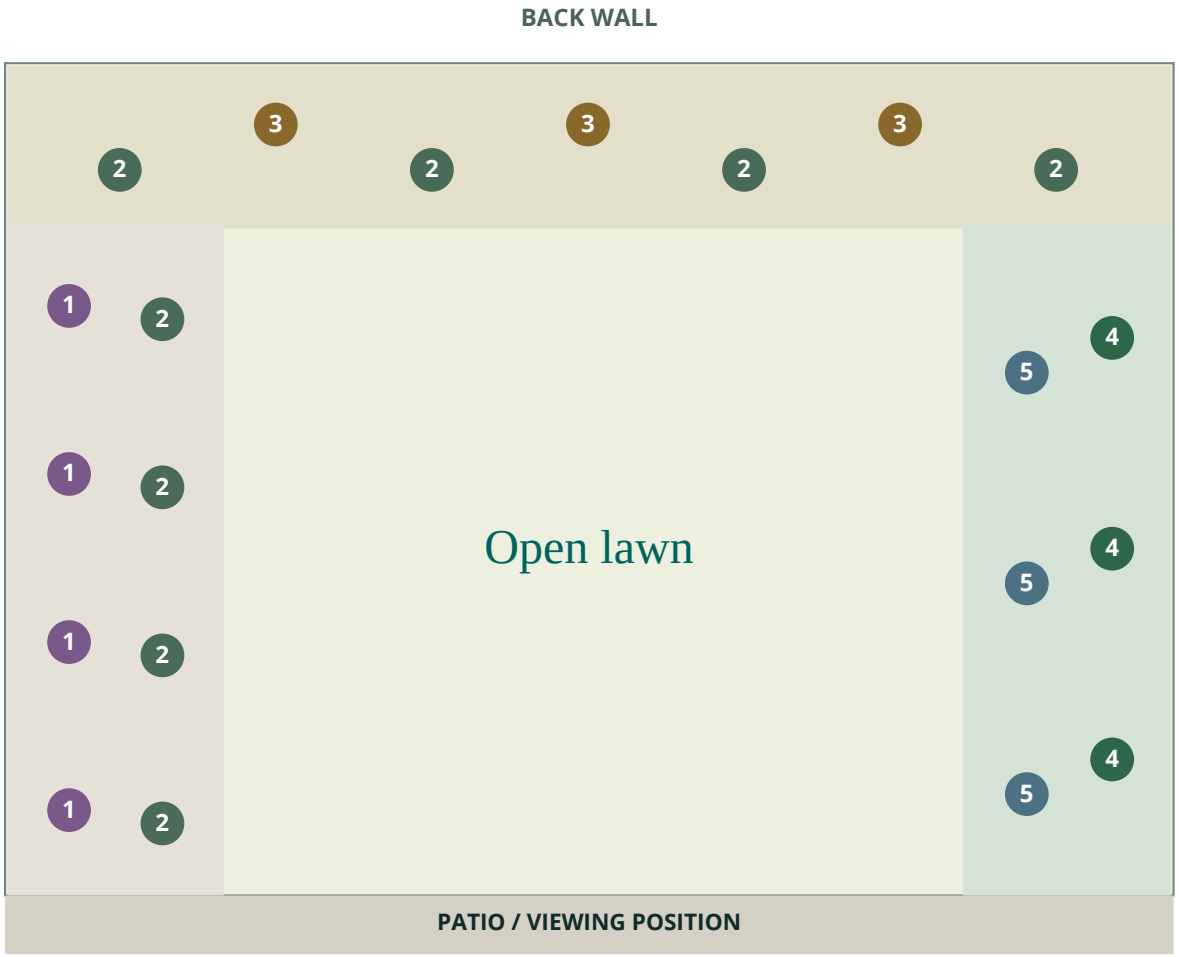
A sunny border, a grass backdrop and a leafy shade border.

## 3 borders / 21 plants / 5 varieties

Use the plan to set out the pots, the care sheets to grow them and the three sample shopping baskets to compare costs.

# Where each plant goes

Read the plan from the patio, looking towards the back wall. Each numbered circle is one plant.




*Indicative layout. Check the final spacing against the nursery labels before digging.*

## Left border

**8 PLANTS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Catmint ‘Walker’s Low’ | × 4 |
| 2 | White cranesbill ‘Album’ | × 4 |

## Back border

**7 PLANTS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Feather reed grass ‘Karl Foerster’ | × 3 |
| 2 | White cranesbill ‘Album’ | × 4 |

## Right border

**6 PLANTS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Male fern | × 3 |
| 5 | Hosta ‘Halcyon’ | × 3 |

Place the grasses behind the low white flowers. Use the cooler right-hand edge for the ferns and hostas.

# 1 Catmint ‘Walker’s Low’

*Nepeta racemosa ‘Walker’s Low’*



## Why it earns its place

Choose this catmint for the sunny edge where you can brush its aromatic foliage as you pass. Its blue-mauve flowers soften the lawn edge beside the white cranesbill.

**Photograph**

Daderot CC0 1.0

Cropped and resized for this guide.

Read the RHS plant profile

## Planting position

Set the four pots along the sunny left border. Choose a spot where rain drains away, then plant at the same depth as the compost in the pot.

## Watering in year one

Feel the soil by the rootball during dry spells. Water slowly at the base when it starts to dry and let surplus moisture drain away.

## Summer trim

After the first flush fades, shorten the flowered stems to tidy the mound and encourage more blooms. Leave any spikes still busy with bees.

## Through winter

Let the stems die back. Mark the clump and tidy away old growth in spring as the fresh leaves appear.

## What to look for

Check soft new shoots for slug damage. A white powdery coating can develop on the leaves in a dry summer.

# 2 White cranesbill ‘Album’

*Geranium sanguineum ‘Album’*



## Why it earns its place

Choose this low, spreading cranesbill to carry the same white flowers from the left border into the back. Put it in front of the grasses so they can still be seen.

**Photograph**

Agnieszka Kwiecień, Nova CC BY-SA 4.0

Cropped and resized for this guide.

Read the RHS plant profile

## Planting position

Place four plants towards the front of each border. Give the stems room to spread in sun or light shade, in soil that drains after rain.

## Watering in year one

Water each clump in after planting. Check both borders during dry weather, as the soil below the back wall may dry at a different rate.

## After flowering

Snip off spent stems and remove tired leaves to encourage fresh growth. Keep healthy leaves in the middle of the clump.

## Autumn and spring

Enjoy the autumn leaf colour before the plant dies back. If established clumps become crowded, lift and divide them in spring.

## What to look for

Inspect nibbled leaves, including their undersides, for sawfly larvae. Match any symptoms to the plant profile before treating.

# 3 Feather reed grass

*Calamagrostis × acutiflora ‘Karl Foerster’*



## Why it earns its place

Choose this upright grass for height along the back wall. Three repeated clumps give the garden a rhythm, and their standing stems keep the backdrop visible in winter.

**Photograph**

Daryl Mitchell CC BY-SA 2.0

Cropped and resized for this guide.

Read the RHS plant profile

## Planting position

Set the three clumps along the back wall, behind the cranesbill. Sun or partial shade and fertile soil that holds some moisture suit this grass.

## Watering in year one

Water in thoroughly. Check the rootballs in dry weather, particularly where the wall shelters the ground from rain. Water when the soil starts to dry.

## Autumn and winter

Leave the upright stems in place for winter structure. Remove any damaged stems individually so the rest of the clump keeps its shape.

## Late-winter cut

Before new green shoots appear, cut last year’s dry stems down near the base. If growth has already started, trim around the fresh shoots.

## What to look for

Rust can show as small orange-brown marks on the leaves. Check both sides before deciding whether any leaves need removing.

# 4 Male fern

*Dryopteris filix-mas*



## Why it earns its place

Choose this fern for height and finely divided foliage in shade. Set it behind the lower hostas so their broad leaves stand out against the feathery fronds.

**Photograph**

Sdjurovic CC0 1.0

Cropped and resized for this guide.

Read the RHS plant profile

## Planting position

Give each fern a cool, lightly shaded spot. Set the crown level with the soil and leave space for its arching fronds to open.

## Watering in year one

Check beneath the leaves and near the fence, where rain may miss the roots. Keep the soil moist while the three ferns establish.

## Tidying the fronds

Remove dead or damaged fronds when needed. Cut the old stalk near its base, keeping clear of tightly coiled young fronds.

## Spring mulch

Spread garden compost on the soil around each fern, leaving its crown clear. As the weather warms, watch the new fronds unfurl.

## What to look for

Brown spots in organised rows underneath a mature frond can be spore cases. Check the whole frond before pruning it.

# 5 Hosta ‘Halcyon’

*Hosta (Tardiana Group) ‘Halcyon’*




## Why it earns its place

Choose ‘Halcyon’ for a low mound of blue-grey leaves in partial shade. At the front of the border, its broad foliage contrasts with the taller ferns.

**Photograph**

Daderot CC0 1.0

Cropped and resized for this guide.

Read the RHS plant profile

## Planting position

Set the three hostas in partial shade ahead of the ferns. They suit sheltered, fertile ground that holds moisture and drains after rain.

## Watering in year one

Check below the broad leaves during warm or windy spells. Water the soil around the rootball if it starts to dry.

## Summer and autumn

The leaves need little pruning. Leave healthy foliage in place through summer and lift away the collapsed leaves once they have died down.

## Spring care

Mark the clumps over winter. Mulch the soil in spring, leaving the crown clear, and watch for the pointed new shoots.

## What to look for

Check emerging leaves for ragged holes and look for slugs and snails after dusk, especially following wet weather.

# Three ways to buy the planting list

21 plants for the same design. Tap any underlined price to see the nursery listing.

| PLANT | QTY | Claire Austin + Perfect Plantings<br>9 cm pots · two orders | Crocus<br>9 cm pots · one order | Burncoose + Coolings<br>1.5–2 L pots · two orders |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Catmint ‘Walker’s Low’ | 4 | £30.00 | £29.98 | £44.00 |
| 2 White cranesbill ‘Album’ | 8 | £60.00 | £64.97 | £96.00 |
| 3 Grass ‘Karl Foerster’ | 3 | £22.50 | £23.99 | £36.00 |
| 4 Male fern | 3 | £18.81 | £23.99 | £50.97 |
| 5 Hosta ‘Halcyon’ | 3 | £22.50 | £25.99 | £36.00 |
| **Plants only** | | **£153.81** | **£168.92** | **£262.97** |
| Separate PMW design fee | | £11.99 | £11.99 | £11.99 |
| **Plants + design, before carriage** | | **£165.80** | **£180.91** | **£274.96** |

## How the baskets compare

Claire Austin singles are £7.50 each for 18 plants. Perfect Plantings supplies the three ferns at £6.27 each. Crocus uses available multipacks and singles. The larger-pot basket uses Burncoose quantity prices and three 2 L ferns from Coolings.

Public retail prices checked 20 November 2026. Delivery and planting are extra. Confirm stock, pot size and delivery charges with each retailer before ordering.