

## Timeline for Cottage Charm

Start your garden by laying out where your beds will go. Outline them with rope, rocks, or paint on the lawn. Make sure everything has gentle curves like the plan. Also, test drive the edges with your lawn mower to ensure you don't end up with awkward corners to mow.

Probably the hardest work comes next; (We would hire someone to do it!) that is, bringing in a lot of dirt and compost to build raised beds. Buy it by the dump truck load. Hopefully, they can dump it in your backyard. If not, use a bobcat to cart it into your yard and dump it where needed. Also, use the bobcat to mix the dirt and compost together for nice, healthy, rich soil. Add about three inches of mulch on top of your soil. To allow for settling, build your beds three inches higher than you want them to ultimately end up.

Why go to this work and expense? Raised beds are much easier to plant in, especially if you have clay or rocky ground. They drain better, add a nice height dimension to your garden, and added compost will help your plants to thrive. You can lay your rock edging now or later.

You can put in your pergola at anytime. This garden could be very enjoyable for years without it, but it would be a good idea to build the paver patio for it to sit on now. You'll have a lot of dirt and mess you won't want later. Do the same for your greenhouse and potting shed.

Once all of your beds are built, go outside during a hard rain and check your drainage. Make sure you have not created any water traps. You may have to add a small drainage ditch or put some PVC pipes under a bed to act as a culvert to drain away water.

Next, install your fence. It will be so much easier to build and install fences before the plants are in the beds. This is also the best time to install a sprinkler system. Keep in mind you will be building a pond later, so don't let your installer run pipes where the pond will go. This garden, and you, will be much happier with a sprinkler system.



## **Timeline for Cottage Charm (continued)**

Here is a very easy way to build your paths. Lay corrugated cardboard as a base, using metal landscape pins to hold it in place. Then add six inches of mulch on top. The cardboard will smother and kill all weeds and grass underneath it. You may need to replenish the mulch annually.

Plant the big trees along the back fence to start your shade garden.

There are a lot of fun weekend projects you can do. Build the Clematis trellises, the cutting garden entry arbor, the little swing outside your vegetable/herb garden, the three birdhouses in your cutting garden, the patio in front of your potting shed, and the potting bench. Plus, your pergola, greenhouse, and potting shed can be built from kits or installed on site.

Build your deck for a pleasant place to enjoy your garden and to rest while planting.

If you are going to build a pond, now would be a good time. You can use the dirt from the pond to build beds around the pond. For future reference, make sure to photograph and map any electrical and pipes around the pond.

You can continue with your planting. The shade garden, cutting garden, vegetable/herb garden, and pond plants can be installed in any order. It's totally up to you.

Your lawn will probably be pretty beat up from all the work rolled over it. It would be a good idea to aerate and reseed in the fall. By the way, when you reseed, use a drop spreader on a very calm day to keep grass seed out of your beds.

You will love Cottage Charm for years to come!

