

Building a new garden is a longer process than at first may be imagined. There's much more to it than digging out a new border or two and putting in some plants, although this it may well be at its simplest. First, there's the briefing meeting (which Brannfords offers free), then we write up and cost a specification to produce a budget. This can be several hours' work and invariably has to be fitted in amongst ongoing work and may be in a queue with other briefs. This stage may take from 2 days to 3 weeks, depending on workload. Next, with an approved specification and budget work may begin. We must now draw up a to-scale ground plan. Frequently ground must be cleared and herbicide applied to get rid of unwanted weeds and other plants. There may also be a 'groundwork' phase, when we move earth around or out of the garden (or bring more in) and install drainage if needed. This may take from 3 to 8 weeks, depending on the weather. The next stage is usually hard landscaping such as patios, paths, walls, pergolas, trellis, etc. Again, this can take some weeks. While this is going on, we prepare a detailed planting list for approval, then start to collect the plants. We can then lay lawns and start planting. Allow 2-4 weeks, again depending on weather. Finally, we lay down an irrigation system (if required) and mulch over the planting to retain moisture and reduce weed growth. This process may therefore take 3-4 months or longer. The reality is nothing like the impression created by instant TV garden makeovers. Ideally, it should be timed for an early autumn brief, so that groundwork is done before the ground gets too wet. It's good to do hard landscaping over the winter, when landscape gardeners have a little less gardening to do. Then we plant trees, shrubs and roses over the winter and herbaceous in the spring. This is of course an ideal. In practice, we build gardens all-year round. In addition, we plant bulbs in autumn and spring, so a winter-spring planted garden may wait for bulbs until the autumn. Absolutely the best time to start the process? In August (or even July) for a garden completed ready for the following year. But don't despair, work can start more or less at any time.