

# How to grow fruit trees in small spaces



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**Q**uestion: I have moved from a large property to a very small one. I miss my fruit trees. How can I still have fruit trees in my tiny yard?

**A**nswer: You can still have your trees and fruit, too, in your confined space if you don't mind a bit more training and pruning than usual. The method I am speaking of is espalier; meaning training your trees to grow flat. You can grow them up against a fence, wall, trellis or on wires.

There are several reasons to espalier your fruit trees. First, you may use this method to save space. Since these trees are grown flat they can be close to a wall or fence as their thickness is kept to a foot or less. Second, it can extend your growing season. Growing next to a wall or brick fence will retain warmth and extend the growing season. You may also successfully grow trees that are usually grown in a warmer



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVE RENQUIST  
**Belgian fence is one method of espalier, or training trees to grow flat.**

climate zone. Lastly, this style can be used to create barriers and fences. Used to provide a barrier, mark a boundary, or as a windbreak. They are functional, productive and beautiful.

There are several different espalier styles to choose from. Candelabra, also called a U-cordon (of which there are about 4 different types). All of these have a basic U shape. You will recognize this style immediately because they look like different types of candelabras. There is also the Y-cordon, the V-cordon, and the S-cordon. Did you guess what they look like? If your guess is a Y, V and S shape you are getting the hang of this. The most common of these

is the horizontal cordon. This has several horizontal branches coming off of the central leader as if you crossed your "T" three, four or five times. A Belgian fence is comprised of more than one tree of the same style in a row with branches of one tree overlapping the next and so on. A fan shape is very easy to do.

Pick your preferred style and select the appropriate tree for it as some shapes are better than others for different trees. Pear and apple trees do well in a triple horizontal cordon and berries, citrus, figs and persimmons work well in a fan shape.

Because espaliered trees are subjected to



**Candelabra and fan espalier forms work well for berries, citrus, figs and persimmons.**

intense pruning it is advisable to select a semi-dwarf or other vigorous rootstock. If you select something other than that, your soil must be very fertile. Select a south or east facing location for the tree and then put in the supports. Plant approximately 11 inches from the fence, wall or support structure.

For a triple horizontal cordon, cut the leader where you want the lowest branches. The whip will branch from where you have cut it. Select the three strongest shoots. Make the strongest the leader go vertical and the two others, horizontal on each side. These will be tied loosely to the supports. Continue growing and tying until the tree is

as wide and high as you like.

For a fan shape, cut leader but select five best shoots, arrange in fan shape and tie. Continue until the desired shape is achieved.

Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call, or visit the Douglas County Master, Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-236-3052, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.