

Once roots have settled into the soil, a young fruit tree will send fresh green sprouts in almost every conceivable direction. How it grows and where it grows is largely a matter of chance. The main need is sun and plenty of it.

Because branches and leaves consistently reach toward the warm magic of the sun, you can snip, bend, and twist trees to grow in nearly any pattern you want. Espalier is the art of shaping trees into special patterns. And the possibilities are practically infinite if you keep some basic tips in mind. There are candelabra, tiered, grid, arched, "U," and "Y" patterns.

Shaping trees is not something dreamed up by idle gardeners; it is a practice developed by European fruit growers to get more fruit from less space. For the home gardener cramped for space, espalier growing can mean bushels of delicious fruit where fruit culture was previously thought out of the question because of a mini-size yard.