

## Using space well

### Make the most of your space

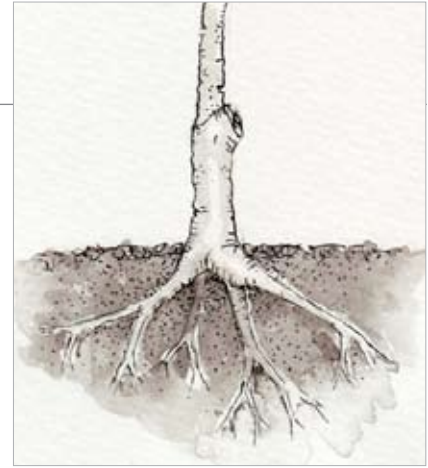
You might think you don't have enough suitable space to grow many fruit trees, but there are ways to get around that.

#### 1. *The right rootstock*

A tree you buy from a nursery usually consists of a 'graft' (a living piece of the variety you want) that has been fused to a 'rootstock' (a living stump). It is the rootstock that controls factors such as how big the tree gets and what soil conditions it can handle. When you buy your tree, tell the nursery the conditions the tree will grow in, so they can advise you on the right rootstock (there's more about rootstocks in the section 'Part 2 – Other Useful Info').

Trees grown on dwarf rootstock can be handy for fitting more types of fruit into a small property, as they only grow to two or three metres in height e.g. dwarf peaches, nectarines, apples, almonds and citrus. BUT:

- they are more delicate, and only do well if they're planted in fertile, well-drained soil
- they have brittle, shallow roots, so they need good shelter, irrigation and mulching, plus staking so they don't blow over.



Adapted from How to Make a Forest Garden

**Rootstock and graft union**

#### 2. *Vertical stacking*

You can fit heaps more plants into a small property if you use 'vertical space' well.

For example, instead of having all your bigger trees in one area, your fruit bushes in another, and your herbs and groundcover fruits somewhere else, you can have a big tree with suitable shrubs planted around it, and herbs and groundcovers in between them all (see the illustration below). This is also known as 'forest gardening' – for more information see:

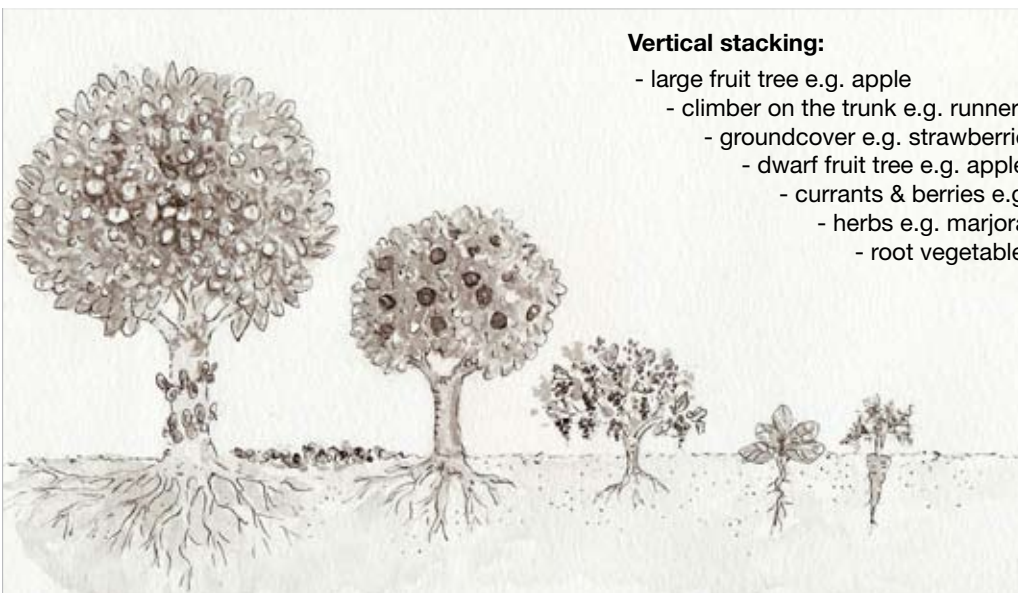
[www.edibleforestgardens.com/about\\_gardening](http://www.edibleforestgardens.com/about_gardening)

[www.agroforestry.co.uk/forngndg](http://www.agroforestry.co.uk/forngndg)

[www.spiralseed.co.uk](http://www.spiralseed.co.uk)

#### **Vertical stacking:**

- large fruit tree e.g. apple
- climber on the trunk e.g. runner bean
- groundcover e.g. strawberries, nasturtiums
- dwarf fruit tree e.g. apple, peach
- currants & berries e.g. blackcurrants
- herbs e.g. marjoram, comfrey
- root vegetables e.g. beetroot



Adapted from Graham Burnett [www.spiralseed.co.uk](http://www.spiralseed.co.uk)

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### 3. Multiple grafts

To increase the number of varieties you can fit onto your section, you can buy trees with other related varieties grafted onto them – they're called 'family trees', or 'double grafts' or 'triples'.

Also, to make sure you have a pollinator for your blossoms, you can graft just one branch of the pollinator variety onto your tree.

If you want to add another variety to an established tree, the instructions on these websites are really clear:

[www.sces.org.nz/pmwiki.php/Content/Grafting](http://www.sces.org.nz/pmwiki.php/Content/Grafting)

[www.sces.org.nz/pmwiki.php/Content/TakingCuttingsFromOldVarieties](http://www.sces.org.nz/pmwiki.php/Content/TakingCuttingsFromOldVarieties)

### 4. Space-saving shapes

You can train trees against a fence or wall, or use them to divide the property into different areas. Berries and vines are also happy growing amongst the shrub border of the garden, or trained over arches and pergolas.

The simplest support structure is galvanised fencing wire attached along a wall, or between two strong posts or stakes.

See the section 'Part 2 – Training' for how to create the shapes below (Cordon, Espalier, Fan).

## An Atawhai gardener

We're growing all our fruit trees as espalier.

We've only got a small backyard, but by using espalier and double grafts, we can grow four varieties of apples, two pears, a greengage and a plum, and we still have room for a dwarf cherry and a mature blackboy peach.

We can easily drape birdnetting over the structures so the birds don't peck holes in the fruit when the weather's dry.

And because the lush tips get pruned off, we don't have problems with insects infesting the growing tips.

### 5. Containers

If your only growing space is on a balcony, you can grow fruiting plants in containers. Other advantages of using containers:

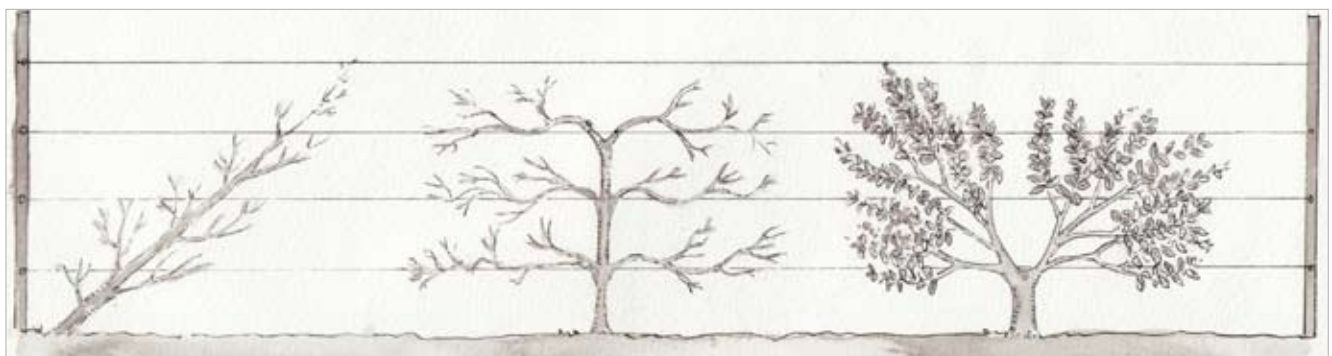
- In a cold area, you can grow citrus and other subtropicals in pots and move them under cover during winter.
- They're decorative e.g. for entrances, decks, paved areas.
- You can take them if you shift house!

BUT containers are less forgiving than growing plants in the ground, so it's easier to run into problems. For more information, see [www.edible.co.nz/growing.php#container](http://www.edible.co.nz/growing.php#container)

Cordon

Espalier

Fan



Adapted from *How to Make a Forest Garden*