



# ask

**Celebrating 20 Years!**  
**the landscape professional**  
 Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

**Welcome to my weekly series!**

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or  
 Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335



Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs  
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**Question this Week:** *This summer I went to the Botanical Gardens in Richmond, VA when I was on vacation and I saw this tree growing directly against a wall. Can you tell me more about it and what it is? - Don*

### Linda's Answer:

That's a great question Don. The tree in your picture is called an Espalier (pronounced: "s-pal-yay") tree. Espalier is a French word that means "something to rest the shoulder against". Espalier trees are any tree or shrub that is trained to grow standing flat up against a wall or trellis, often in a symmetrical or artistic pattern, supported by wire. Good types of trees to work with are fruit trees such as apple, peach or pear trees. It is believed that the Ancient Romans began the practice of Espalier and it got passed on to the middle ages where growing the plant in an intricate design was considered an art. Espalier trees were popularly used in Europe to decorate the walls and grow fruit inside of a typical castle courtyard without interfering with the open space. Espalier trees are very popular in Europe today because they take up less space than normal trees in their smaller yards. During the 17th Century, the word Espalier referred to the practice of training trees to grow in designs along a wall, but as time went on, the word started to also refer to the plant itself. Espalier plants are usually planted roughly six inches away from the base of a wall to allow the roots to grow. Wires to guide and support the plant are generally needed for any complex design and should be installed directly into a wall or trellis with nails or hooks. If you look closely at your picture, you will see one wire at each branch level. Some Espalier trees are trained horizontally as in your picture, but other designs are possible such as a "U" shape. Bending or training the limbs of the Espalier should be done in the summer season when the plant is the most flexible. The trees need to be pruned and guided into their design frequently. Earlier this summer, Sprigs & Twigs built a trellis and planted a cold-climate Apple Espalier tree with four different types of apples growing on one tree; Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith and Gavenstein. We expect the tree to grow to be 8-10 feet tall and 10-15 feet wide. If you would like an Espalier tree on your property, get in touch with us and we can help.



*Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 20 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.*

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