

Spires at Dusk

An improv forest of tapered triangles in spruce, blush and brass



English subtitle: An improv forest of tapered triangles in spruce, blush and brass

1. Finished size

- Finished quilt size: **56 in × 72 in** (142 cm × 183 cm)
- Quilt layout: **6 blocks wide × 8 blocks high** (48 spire blocks total)
- Block finished size: **8 in × 9 in** (20.3 cm × 22.9 cm)
- Sashing (off-white): **2 in wide** strips between blocks
- Binding (low-contrast): **approx. 1/4 in seam allowances** finished width ~ 1/4 in

2. Materials and yardage

Yardages assume usable fabric width of 42 in (107 cm) and a fabric cut plan that uses narrow strips and some offcuts. If you prefer more variety, purchase an extra 1/8–1/4 yard of one or more top fabrics.

Outer/Background (off-white cotton)

Spires (scrap improv, 5–6 fabrics)

- Chalky off-white for background and sashing: **2 3/4 yd**
- Deep spruce green: **1 yd**
- Sage/gray-green: **1/2 yd**
- Oxblood red/burgundy: **1/4 yd**
- Blush pink: **1/4 yd**
- Brushed brass-gold: **1/2 yd**
- Optional “extra” accent (a sixth tone): **1/4 yd**

Backing

- Backing: **3 1/2 yd** (42 in wide). Piece if needed to reach at least 56 in × 72 in.

Batting & Notions

- Batting: **1 package** of 56 in × 72 in or a little larger (or cut from larger roll)
- Thread for piecing: neutral (50 wt)
- Quilting thread (warm white): **1 spool**
- Binding: matching/low-contrast fabric: **5/8 yd**
- Optional: design wall, rotary cutter, long straightedge, acrylic ruler

Color planning tip: For each spire, use 4–6 narrow “stacked strip” layers: alternate greens and warm accents (brass/blush/oxblood) so the vertical channels read clearly after quilting.

3. Cutting

This quilt is designed with a **strip-stacked improv block**. You will cut a repeatable set of *layer widths*, then assemble each block by trimming to match a tapered template.

3A. Sashing and background pieces

- Off-white sashing strips: cut **2 in × WOF** (width of fabric), then crosscut as needed.
- Total blocks: 6 × 8. There are **7 vertical sashing runs** per row of blocks and **9 horizontal runs** per column. (You can manage this by cutting long strips, then trimming to exact length after test-assembling.)

Cutting target lengths:

- Vertical sashing (between blocks, per row): **8 in** finished block height × 8 blocks plus seams is already accounted for by using **2 in sashing strips** and trimming. For simplicity, cut sashing strips long, assemble, and then square/travel to exact.

If you prefer a fully calculated approach, ask and I can provide an exact cut list for sashing lengths. This pattern is intentionally “build-and-square” to accommodate slight trim differences from improv tapering.

3B. Spire layer strips (make enough for 48 blocks)

Each finished block is made from **5 layers** of narrow fabric strips stacked and trimmed into a tapered spire. You will cut strips from each spire fabric and then sub-cut to the needed lengths.

Cut 5 layer strips per block (approximate starting sizes):

- Layer A (base, widest): cut strips **3 in wide** (from chosen fabric). Sub-cut into **9 1/2 in** long pieces.
- Layer B: cut strips **2 1/2 in wide**. Sub-cut into **9 1/2 in** long pieces.
- Layer C: cut strips **2 in wide**. Sub-cut into **9 1/2 in** long pieces.
- Layer D: cut strips **1 1/2 in wide**. Sub-cut into **9 1/2 in** long pieces.
- Layer E (top, narrowest): cut strips **1 in wide**. Sub-cut into **9 1/2 in** long pieces.

Quantity guidance: 48 blocks × 1 piece per layer = 240 pieces total.

- For a balanced look, allocate roughly: 60 base pieces (Layer A), 60 Layer B, 60 Layer C, 48 Layer D, 48 Layer E across the main fabrics. Use your scraps—if a piece is short, swap it in; improv is the point.

3C. Backing and binding

- Backing: cut to at least **60 in × 76 in** (or piece two panels to reach ~56×72 plus squaring allowance).
- Binding: cut **5–6 strips of 2 1/2 in × WOF**. You will likely need about 320–350 inches of combined binding length for this size.

4. Piecing / block construction

Each spire block is built by stacking five rectangles, then trimming into a tapered isosceles triangle profile. This creates the “stacked strips that narrow as they rise” effect.

4A. Make a simple taper/trimming template

- On card stock or thin template plastic, draw a tall isosceles shape inside a rectangle of about **9 in wide × 10 in tall**.
- Target finished block size is **8 in × 9 in**. With seam allowances, work at about **9 in × 10 in** before trimming.
- For a clean spire:
 - Bottom width (near base): **8 1/4 in**
 - Top width (near tip, leave a tiny flat): **1 1/4 in**
 - Vertical height of trimming line: **9 1/2 in**

You can adjust the top width wider (up to ~1 1/2 in) if you dislike needle-sharp points. The quilt reads well with slightly blunt tips.

4B. Assemble one spire block

Make 48 blocks, alternating orientation later in the layout.

1. **Stack layers:** Lay Layer A (base) wrong-side up. Place Layer B on top right sides together along the seam line you choose (see next step), then Layer C, Layer D, Layer E. Keep edges aligned at least at the seam allowances.
2. **Stitch each seam:** Use a consistent seam allowance of **1/4 in**. Sew Layer A–B, then B–C, then C–D, then D–E.
3. **Press:** Press seams upward (toward the top) for a consistent look. Alternatively, press open if you prefer extra flatness.
4. **Trim to spire profile:** Lay your template over the pieced stack so the seam lines fall within the taper. Trim left and right edges to form the tapered sides, keeping the bottom square-ish.
5. **Square the block:** Trim to a consistent **9 in × 10 in** working size (so it finishes at **8 in × 9 in** when sashed with 1/4 in seams on all sides).
6. **Repeat:** Start the next block with a different fabric combination for improv variation.

4C. Orientation (upright vs mirrored)

- After trimming, create **two orientations** without remaking:
 - **Upright:** taper point at the top.
 - **Mirrored:** flip the block so the taper reads as a down-pointed spire when placed in the row pattern (visually alternating upright and mirrored spires).
- In the grid layout, alternate every other block so the forest feels loose rather than rigid.

5. Quilt top assembly

This layout uses spire blocks separated by narrow off-white sashing. Assemble on a design wall if possible.

5A. Layout

- Make 8 rows (top to bottom), each row containing 6 blocks.
- Alternate upright and mirrored blocks across each row.
- Between blocks, add **2 in wide off-white sashing**.
- Include off-white border rails only if you want extra breathing room; otherwise, the sashing grid acts as the main framing.

5B. Sewing order (recommended)

1. **Make row strips:** Sew blocks to sashing to create one complete row at a time (block–sashing–block–sashing...). Press seams consistently (press toward the sashing).
2. **Join rows:** Sew rows together with 1/4 in seams. Press seams toward the alternating sashing.
3. **Measure and square:** After assembling, check the quilt top size. Trim only if absolutely necessary; improv spires should already line up well.

Squaring check: Lay a 90° ruler along the top edge. If a seam “creeps” by more than ~1/8 in, stop and correct that row before quilting.

6. Basting, quilting and binding

6A. Basting

- Press the quilt top lightly (avoid stretching).
- Layer: backing (right side down) + batting + quilt top (right side up).
- Baste using safety pins or spray basting. Keep the spire points flat.

6B. Quilting plan (vertical walking-foot channels)

This quilt is designed for vertical emphasis. The “walking-foot channels” run through the spires, following their vertical axis and spacing so the fabrics read like stacked forest growth.

- Quilting thread: **warm white** for contrast in the deeper greens.
- Stitching distance: **1/4 in to 3/8 in** apart (as space allows), forming narrow vertical channel lines.
- Technique: walking foot over pieced quilt top; stitch straight channels from sashing area down/up through the spire shape.

Chevrons in negative space:

- Pick **3–5 blocks per quilt** (scatter them) and add a small chevron motif by hand in the negative space (near the sashing between spires or between tapered edges).
- Hand stitch: backstitch or stem stitch, using warm white thread.
- Chevron size: roughly **3 in wide × 2 in tall** per motif.

6C. Binding

1. **Join binding strips:** Sew strips end-to-end with diagonal seams. Press seams open.
2. **Attach to front:** Use a 1/4 in seam allowance. Start about 8–10 in from a corner/sashing intersection.
3. **Turn and finish:** Turn binding to the back and hand-stitch or top-stitch to finish.

Low-contrast binding placement

- Choose a binding fabric that sits between the sashing off-white and the darker spires (muted green-beige or warm gray works).
- This keeps focus on the vertical spires and walking-foot channels.

7. Finishing notes

- **Pressing:** After quilting, press quilt flat from the center outward. Steam lightly to relax thread tension.
- **Point care:** If any spire tips are fragile, trim only stray threads and avoid aggressive finger-pulling when turning binding.
- **Thread choice:** Warm white quilting thread (rather than bright white) prevents the channels from overpowering brass and blush tones.
- **Wash/finish:** Prewash fabrics if you prefer. Otherwise, expect minor shrinkage; recheck finished size after quilting if you're matching a specific bed.
- **Design variation:** Swap any layer fabrics within the five-layer spire stack. Try keeping the top layers (E) in similar tonal families so the forest line stays cohesive.

Pattern designed for an improv stacked-strip spire approach with a contemporary sashing grid and vertical channel quilting.