

Crape Myrtle

Info Sheet

Lagerstroemia indica

Crape Myrtle is a spectacular flowering tree or shrub for the summer months, when most other plants are not in bloom. This native of southern Asia and Australia has been used in landscapes throughout the southeastern U.S. for its fast growth, cold hardiness, and brilliant flower spikes from June through September. Crape Myrtle is a deciduous plant, losing its alternately arranged leaves in the fall as they turn reddish in color. In spring new growth emerges with the return of warm weather. Maximum size and flower color depend on the cultivar and variety. Crape Myrtles are available in many varieties which may grow to a maximum of three feet to over 20 feet in height. Flower colors range from white to lavender, purple, pinks and reds, in different varieties. After flowering occurs, old bloom spikes should be removed to encourage increased flowering throughout the summer. Crape Myrtles can be used in the landscape as specimen or accent trees or shrubs. They may also be used along the street as an avenue planting.

Planting: Crape Myrtles grow well in many different types of soil; however, best growth can be expected when plants are set in a well-drained, improved soil in full or half-day sun. Plants should be placed in the ground at soil level, and a three to four foot mulched ring should be left around the base to conserve moisture and help protect from possible damage from lawn maintenance equipment. Newly planted trees or shrubs should be watered every two or three days for the first six weeks, and then only as necessary to prevent wilt.

Fertilizing: Frequent light applications of **Sunniland 6-6-6** fertilizer will get the trees or shrubs off to a good start. Apply one-half cup of fertilizer per tree or shrub every six to eight weeks during the growing season. Larger established trees or shrubs should be fertilized in early spring and late summer, using one to three pounds of **Espoma Tree-Tone** per plant. Fertilizer should be applied throughout the entire root zone, which includes the area out to and slightly beyond the canopy spread of the plant.

Pruning: After each blooming, remove old bloom stalks for increased flowering throughout the summer. Prune to shape in late winter.

Plant problems:

Powdery mildew disease: A fungus which produces a whitish powder on buds and leaves causing leaf distortion and flower malformation. Usually occurs in areas of poor air circulation during humid weather. **Solution:** Existing fungus may be sprayed with Maneb which are broad spectrum fungicides. Spray according to the proper application rate as specified on the label. There are powder mildew resistant varieties of Crape Myrtle.

Root-rot: Disease which attacks the roots and may cause premature death of the plant; usually occurs from excess moisture around the root zone. **Solution:** No control available for this disease. Plants should be placed in a well-drained location with little or no chance of standing water or poor drainage.

Aphids: Sucking type insects that attack new growth and flower buds, causing distorted leaves and flowers. **Solution:** Spray with **Insect Killing Soap** or **Bayer Advanced Garden Rose and Flower Insect Killer** according to the proper application rate as specified on the label. Lady bugs may be purchased and released as an excellent means of biological control.



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Varieties

Dynamite	cherry red	10-20 feet; large & upright	Vigorous upright grower; crimson flower buds; thick leathery foliage
Muskogee	light lavender	20+ feet; broad tall tree	Grows very fast; blooms good; excellent exfoliating bark; excellent street tree; fall leaf color--red/orange
Natchez	white	20+ feet; broad tall tree	Hardest; largest grower; best exfoliating bark; excellent flowers; fall leaf color--red/orange
Raspberry Sundae	red to pink/white	10-20 feet; upright bush	Thick leathery leaves;; crimson flower buds; begins flowering in mid-summer & continues into fall
Red Rocket	deep red	20+ feet; wide canopy	Reddest of the reds; fast growing; very mildew resistant canopy is often 15+ feet across; grows quite fast
Tonto	dark red	8-12 feet; upright bush	Best medium size red flowers; dark foliage with white exfoliating bark; fall leaf color--maroon
Tuscarora	watermelon red	20+ feet; broad vase shape	Fast grower; good heavy bloomer; nice exfoliating bark; excellent street tree; fall leaf color--red/orange