Crape Myrtle

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 or 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.

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 Systemic Fungicide. Spray according to the proper application rate as specified on the label. There are powdery 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.

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.

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Varieties

Arapaho
- true red
- 15-20 feet; large & upright
- Spreading tree or shrub; maroon tinged foliage; good fall color; use as hedge or ornamental tree

Basham Party Pink
- lavender-pink
- 20+ feet; broad vase shape
- Upright tall tree; orange-red autumn color; can be pruned to be lower & spreading

Burgundy Cotton
- white
- 10-15 feet; upright plant
- Beautiful burgundy new foliage color; red fall color; use as shrub or ornamental tree

Dynamite
- cherry red
- 10-20 feet; upright plant
- Vigorous upright grower; crimson flower buds; thick leathery foliage

Hopi
- medium pink
- 8-12 feet; rounded shrub
- Early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange

Muskogee
- watermelon red
- 20+ feet; broad vase shape
- Exfoliating bark; nice exfoliation; good heavy bloomer; nice exfoliating bark; excellent exfoliating bark; excellent flowers; dark foliage with white exfoliating bark; thin leaf color red-orange

Natchez
- white
- 20-30 feet; broad tall tree
- Grows very fast; blooms good; excellent exfoliating bark; autumn leaf color red-orange; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange

Rhapsody in Pink
- light pink
- 10-15 feet; upright plant
- New foliage is wine-colored for several weeks; flowers reddest of the reds; fast growing; very mildew resistant; begins flowering in mid-summer & continues into fall

Sioux
- bright pink
- 10-20 feet; upright plant
- Dense growth; outstanding flowers; copper colored leaves; has smaller leaves than most other crape myrtles; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; good fall color; use as hedge or shrub

Tonto
- dark red
- 8-12 feet; upright plant
- Vigorous upright grower; crimson flower buds; thick leathery foliage

Tuscarora
- watermelon red
- 20+ feet; broad vase shape
- Exfoliating bark; nice exfoliation; good heavy bloomer; nice exfoliating bark; exfoliating bark; thin leaf color red-orange

Zuni
- purple
- 8-12 feet; rounded shrub
- Autumn leaf color red-orange; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange

Pink Velour
- pink
- 5-10 feet; open bush/tree
- Exceptional pink blooms with wine-burgundy tinged leaves; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange

Raspberry Sundae
- red to pink/white
- 10-20 feet; upright plant
- Thick leathery leaves; crimson flower buds; can be trained to be dense and low to the ground; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange

Red Rocket
- deep red
- 20+ feet; wide canopy
- Vigorous upright grower; crimson flower buds; thick leathery foliage

Rhapsody in Pink
- light pink
- 10-20 feet; upright plant
- New foliage is wine-colored for several weeks; flowers reddest of the reds; fast growing; very mildew resistant; begins flowering in mid-summer & continues into fall

Sioux
- bright pink
- 10-20 feet; upright plant
- Dense growth; outstanding flowers; copper colored leaves; has smaller leaves than most other crape myrtles; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; good fall color; use as hedge or shrub

Tonto
- dark red
- 8-12 feet; upright plant
- Vigorous upright grower; crimson flower buds; thick leathery foliage

Tuscarora
- watermelon red
- 20+ feet; broad vase shape
- Exfoliating bark; nice exfoliation; good heavy bloomer; nice exfoliating bark; exfoliating bark; thin leaf color red-orange

Zuni
- purple
- 8-12 feet; rounded shrub
- Autumn leaf color red-orange; early bloomer; abundant, large flowers; autumn leaf color red-orange