

Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)

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Summary:

Foliage: Deciduous broadleaf
Height: 4 to 25 feet (depending on cultivar)
Spread: 5 to 20 feet (depending on cultivar)
Shape: Upright or mound (depending on cultivar)
Glossy, dark green foliage turns yellow, orange, and red in fall. Flowers may be white, pink, red, or purple. Exfoliating bark is ornamental.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 6b (6a) to 9
Light: Partial shade to full sun
Moisture: Moist to dry
Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay
pH Range: 4.5 to 7.3

Functions:

Suggested uses for this plant include border and specimen plant.

Planting Notes:

Good soil drainage is required.
To minimize pruning, select a cultivar with a mature size that fits the chosen space.

Care:

Prune dead wood from the plant in the spring. Because much of the beauty of this species comes from this species' very handsome exfoliating trunks, topping (or major pruning) the main branches is strongly discouraged because it ruins the plant's natural beauty. If such pruning is necessary, then you have selected an inappropriate cultivar whose mature size does not match that of the site dimensions. This type of pruning has been metaphorically and colloquially called "crape murder."

Problems:

Susceptible to many problems such as powdery mildew, black spot, tip blight, *Cercospora* leaf spot, aphid, root rot, and Florida wax scale, although pest problems occur relatively infrequently. Powdery mildew resistant cultivars are available.
A portion or the entire stem/trunk structure of crapemyrtle may die in zones 6a or 5. Cold-hardy varieties have been introduced (discussed below).

Cultivars:

Consult local garden centers, and historic or public gardens and arboreta, regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

Japanese crapemyrtle, *Lagerstroemia fauriei*, is a 30 foot tall tree with white flowers, a cinnamon trunk color that is outstanding, powdery mildew resistance, and is claimed to be more cold hardy than *L. indica*. This species has been hybridized with *L. indica* to produce a number of very attractive, hardy, and mildew resistant cultivars.

Louisiana State University has evaluated numerous cultivars of crapemyrtle and the following cultivars were ranked the best in terms of susceptibility/tolerance to powdery mildew and *Cercospora* leaf spot. The hardiness values are given but these should be interpreted with the knowledge that the evaluations were conducted in a Texas crapemyrtle evaluation.

However, 'Natchez' hardiness which was ranked "very good" in Texas has survived zone 6a temperatures (Blacksburg, VA) without any stem or trunk damage. So, there is some relevance of the Texas hardiness rankings to probable hardiness in Virginia.

'Natchez' (hybrid) has large white flowered blooms with handsome exfoliating bark. The mature height is about 30 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

'Muskogee' (hybrid) has light lavender flowers and the mature height is about 20 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

'Tuscarora' (hybrid) has coral pink flowers and handsome bark. The mature height is about 25 feet. Hardiness rank was moderate.

'Tonto' (hybrid) has deep red flowers (some say fuchsia) and a mature height of about 14 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

'Basham's Party Pink' (hybrid) has lavender-pink flowers and the mature height is about 25 feet. Hardiness rank was poor.

'Acoma' (hybrid) has white flowers and a weeping/cascading habit. The mature height is about 12 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

'Sioux' (hybrid) flowers are vivid pink and the bloom period is quite long. The mature height is about 15 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

'Tuskegee' (hybrid) flowers are dark pink and mature height is about 20 feet. Hardiness rank was very good.

Dwarf Cultivars

A relatively new group of dwarf crapemyrtle cultivars has been introduced under the name Razzle Dazzle®. This series of crapemyrtles, which come in a range of flower colors, is advertised as having a mature height of 4 feet, a mounded habit, and a zone 6 hardiness.

Comments:

The ornamental bark looks especially beautiful in combination with a contrasting colored ground cover. The showy summer flowers, good fall foliage color, beautiful trunk coloration, and overall form endow this plant with a four season appeal and worthy of a specimen tree status.

The National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. has introduced many new crapemyrtle cultivars.

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