

CREPE MYRTLE

There are few plants that offer the wide range of colors and bush shapes as the crepe myrtle. There are colors ranging from cranberry red to white and peppermint picotee edges. There are miniature or weeping, dwarf, medium and tall crepe myrtles.

Miniature Crepe Myrtles 18-24": These crepes are ideal for container growing, the varieties, known as 'Dixie Series' have names like, 'Baton Rouge', 'Cordon Bleu', 'Mardi Gras', and others. Another series known as the "Pixie Series" is even lower growing. These lowest growing types bloom from mid-May to October. They can be used as permanent, winter-hardy hanging basket plants for sunny areas.

Dwarf Crepe Myrtle 3-7ft: Varieties include 'Royalty', Pink Ruffles, Acoma, and others. Plants in this group maintain rather bushy growth habit that is conducive to heavy pruning, making it possible to keep them at the lower height of three feet. This would make a very interesting hedge or border planting.

Semi-Dwarf Crepe Myrtle 8-12 ft: Varieties include Pink Velour, Zuni, and Twilight. These varieties can attain the look of a small tree. With these larger growing varieties, bark character becomes an artistic quality to consider. Most tree type Crepe Myrtles slough off their old bark each spring as the tree begins new growth. This exfoliating bark peels off like a birch tree and reveals smooth, satiny underlying new bark. The contrast of the rough and smooth textures is valuable in your landscape.

Medium and Tall Crepe Myrtles 12-20 ft tall: Varieties include Natchez, Dynamite, Peppermint Lace, and Watermelon Red. With its strong upright growth habit and stout trunk, these varieties can be planted as a medium sized deciduous tree in your landscape. Tree types often grow with multiple trunks. You will often have a new sprout each spring. Clipping these off will keep the main trunks strong and vigorous.

Planting

Crepe Myrtles are easy to plant and grow. A well-prepared bed or planting hole will provide the plant with much better survival. Follow our Tree and shrub Planting Guide (always available at www.littlerednursery.com). Choose a sight that will get ample sun at least 4-6 hours a day. The root ball should be kept in tact and care should be taken to avoid any unnecessary jarring to the root system. Plant the plant at the level of the soil on the root ball and even a little higher by 3-4" than the surrounding area. Backfill with half garden soil and half Soil Mender Blend Compost and water with fertilome Root stimulator solution every week for the first two months.

Pruning

Upon planting, you may want to prune off some of the tips of your plants, especially if there are any seed pods present. Removal of the seed pods will help spur new growth that produces blooms. Since Crepe Myrtles bloom on this new growth, heavy pruning in early April will promote abundant new growth which will then give way to profuse blooming in summer. Removal of all seed pods is important, and pruning any old stalks smaller than a pencil will help. Cutting the stalks with a 1" caliper or more can result in too many branches sprouting from one joint, creating a weak spot. This too can be corrected by pruning out the excess stalks, and in time the flat cut end will disappear. Keeping the sprouts pruned from the base of your trees will also improve the beauty of the trunks.

Insects and Disease

Aphids and flea beetles are the most common pests of Crepe Myrtles. We recommend spraying with Safer Insecticidal Soap on a regular basis. Malathion or Orthinex can be used for control or established colonies and harder to kill pests. Bayer brand now has a wonderful systemic insecticide, miticide, fungicide, and fertilizer all in an easy to dilute concentrate. This is our first choice since it protects trees for a whole season.

Powdery Mildew is a most common disease. It appears as if flour has been dusted on the new growth. It can be controlled culturally by making sure there is enough sun, and watering on the soil only. A preventative spray to use is Ultrafine Horticultural Oil.

Fertilizing

Fertilome Tree and Shrub food is excellent for use on crepe myrtle. Supplemental applications of Iron and soil acidifier will help to correct any Iron deficiencies. Espoma Flowertone will encourage more profuse blooming in the summer months.

If you have any question please call, write or drop by:

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