



Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)



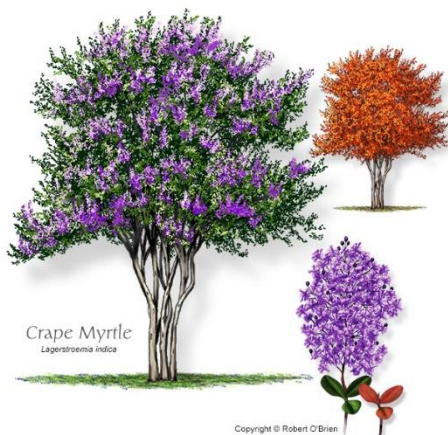
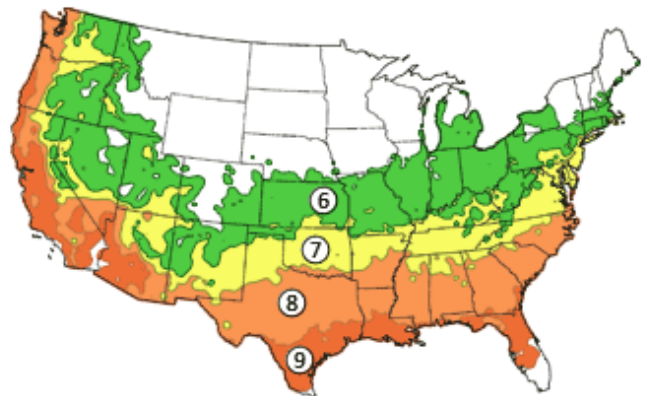
Crape or Crepe?

The traditional Southern spelling is "Crepe Myrtle" (because the delicate flowers resemble crepe paper). However, **across the US, it is more commonly found as "Crape Myrtle"**. ... In addition, the American Horticultural Society Encyclopedia uses the spelling, "Crape Myrtle".

The common crape myrtle is a deciduous, small to medium sized shrub or small tree with a variable, moderately dense habit, often multi-stemmed form. The showy pink flowers have wrinkled petals like crepe paper. The foliage is dark green changing in fall to yellows, oranges, and reds. The thin gray bark is exfoliating, exposing a smooth, vari-colored under bark ranging from brown to gray. It needs plenty of moisture when young. After it is established it will tolerate drought and grow well in limited soil spaces. During the growing season, new growth can be pinched to increase flower number and branchiness. The branches will droop as the tree grows. The lower branches are often thinned to show off the trunk form and color. Because pruning can significantly reduce cold hardiness, you should try to have it completed by early August. Plant 3'-4' apart for a single row hedge.

Hardiness Zones

The crape myrtle can be expected to grow in Hardiness Zones 6–9.



Tree Type



Mature Size

The common crape myrtle grows to a height of 15–25' and a spread of 6–15' at maturity.



Growth Rate

This shrub grows at a fast rate, with height increases of more than 24" per year.



Sun Preference

Full sun is the ideal condition for this shrub, meaning it should get at least 6 hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight each day.



Soil Preference

The common crape myrtle grows in a wide range of soils from slightly alkaline to acidic. It prefers moist, well-drained sites but has some drought tolerance.



Attributes

- Can be grown as a shrub or small tree.
- Is well-suited for hot, sunny climates.
- Produces wide, showy panicles in various shades of pink, with flowers that have wrinkled petals similar to crepe paper, from late spring into fall.
- Has thin, gray bark that exfoliates, exposing smooth under-bark with varying colors ranging from brown to gray.
- Can have increased flower number and branchiness if you pinch new growth during the growing season.
- Grows in a vase shape.
- Grows well in limited soil space.
- Features foliage that is dark green, changing to shades of yellow, orange, and red in the fall.



Wildlife Value

This shrub attracts bees and provides bird habitat.



History/Lore

The common crape myrtle is a native of China and Korea. It is called the "lilac of the South." The number of cultivars is enormous. Among these, the U.S. National Arboretum introductions are important for their disease resistance, good flowering, and ornamental bark.

Thanks to his work with crape myrtle breeding for most of his professional life, Dr. Carl Witcomb -- researcher, author, and professor at the University of Florida and Oklahoma State University for 20 years -- has patented cultivars that are hardy in Zone 6 and even on warmer sites in Zones 4 and 5.

Often referred to as the "lilac of the South," the crape myrtle is a favorite for landscapes. It can be grown as either a shrub or small tree and is often used in groupings, containers, hedges, and screens. You can even find the common crape myrtle used as small street trees in urban settings.



Photo – The Crape Myrtle Company

