

Crapemyrtles: A Southern Tree Tradition

With their vibrant colored blooms, muscular, exfoliating bark, and tolerance for drought and heat, it's no wonder that crapemyrtles are such a popular tree for the southeast.

There are dozens of varieties of this beautiful tree, bred for flower color, size and habit.



Delicate lavender blossoms of a Muskogee crapemyrtle.



Cinnamon bark of a Natchez crapemyrtle.

Right Plant, Right Place

With so many varieties to choose from, it's important to select the appropriate tree for your space. Tree varieties start at about 5' and can get over 20' tall. The habit of crapemyrtles varies from upright and columnar to low and spreading. Selecting the best tree from the beginning will alleviate maintenance concerns down the road.



Crapemyrtles bloom best in full sun.

Which crapemyrtle to you prefer?



Poorly Pruned
Crapemyrtle



Correctly Pruned
Crapemyrtle

No more Crape Murder!

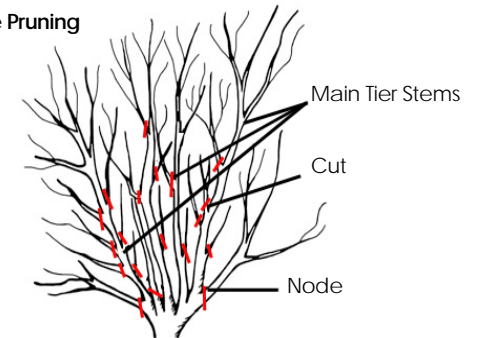
The only routine maintenance necessary for crapemyrtles is occasional fertilization, light pruning of suckers and sprouts, and supplemental watering during periods of drought.

Sometimes when a crapemyrtle has grown beyond the desired height or spread, a more intensive maintenance course may become necessary. Unfortunately, the practice of "topping" or indiscriminately removing the upper portion of the limbs of these graceful trees is often employed. This practice is unaffectionately called "Crape Murder". It is so common, in fact, that many maintenance professionals and homeowners believe it to be healthy for the tree. In actuality, Crape Murder places the tree under stress to quickly produce new growth and creates wounds which can open the door to insects and disease. Topping can lead to a shortened life span or even death and leaves behind scars that mar the graceful limbs typical of the species. Proper pruning is possible though, and with a few basic instructions, you can modify your crapemyrtle to fit your landscape needs without sacrificing its natural beauty.

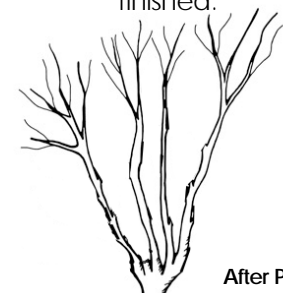
How to Prune your Tree-Form Crapemyrtle

- Prune your crapemyrtle in the late winter or early spring, before growth begins.
- Remove limbs from their *point of attachment*, or "node". Don't leave stubs.
- If a crapemyrtle is just the right height, or shorter, then simply remove old flower heads and seedpods.
- If your crapemyrtle was the perfect size last season, but the summer's growth made it too tall, remove just the growth at lateral branches or stem forks.
- If your crapemyrtle is overgrown and requires significant pruning:

Before Pruning



Start by identifying the **main stems** and avoid cutting those. Prune out interior limbs first and suckers that have grown from roots. Next, choose your desired height and prune back second and third tier branches at their **nodes** to that height. The tree should be somewhat umbrella shaped when you're finished.



After Pruning