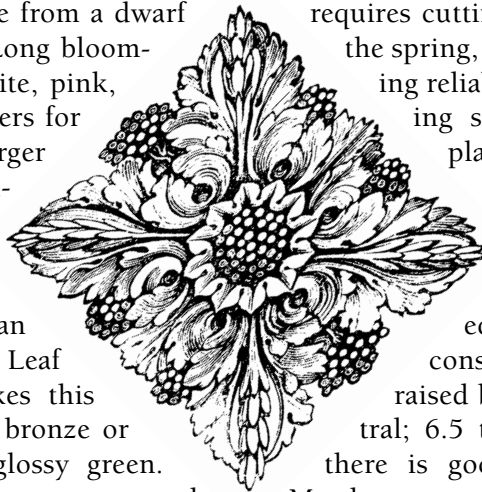




# Crape Myrtle

Popular in the south and now a favorite of northern gardeners, Crape Myrtles, *Lagerstroemia indica*, are one of the most irresistible summer-flowering woody plants. Variable in habit, cultivars of this fast growing plant can range in size from a dwarf to medium shrub or a small tree. Long blooming, Crape Myrtles flaunt their white, pink, purple or red crepe paper-like flowers for 60 to 120 days. At maturity, the larger growing Crape Myrtles are multi-stemmed shrubs or trees that exhibit smooth, gray bark which exfoliates exposing multi-colored under-bark in various shades of tan and brown, including cinnamon. Leaf color is another feature that makes this plant so appealing. Leaves emerge bronze or purplish and mature to a deep glossy green. Autumn leaf color may be yellow, orange or red depending on the cultivar. Finally, persistent, ornamental, brown seed capsules provide winter interest making the Crape Myrtle an excellent four season landscape plant.



In the northern garden, situate Crape Myrtles in a sunny, protected location. Hardy to -5°F, the Crape Myrtle, if not in a protected area in zone 6, must often be treated as a herbaceous perennial. This requires cutting old wood back to the ground, in the spring, as new growth appears. When planting reliably hardy varieties in our area, pruning should be done in early spring as plants bloom on new wood. Crape Myrtles are late to leaf out, usually around mid-May. Plant in moist, well drained soil amended with plenty of organic matter. If intended planting area has heavy clay soil, consider planting Crape Myrtles in a raised bed. Soil pH should be close to neutral; 6.5 to 7.5. Site plant in an area where there is good air circulation as some Crape Myrtles are prone to powdery mildew. These plants do not mind the Delaware Valley's heat and humidity. Irrigate during dry spells and mulch to conserve soil moisture. Crape Myrtles are very drought tolerant when established. Fertilize with a 5-10-5 fertilizer in the early spring and again in early June to encourage good bud set.

## Common Crape Myrtle Varieties

<u>Variety</u>	<u>Flower Color</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Fall Leaf Color</u>
<i>Dwarf (less than 3')</i>			
Chicksaw	pink-lavender	compact shrub	bronze-red
Tightwad	red	compact, mounding	N/A
<i>Semi-dwarf (6 – 8')</i>			
Hopi	med. pink	dense, rounded shrub	orange-red to dk. red
<i>Intermediate (10 – 15')</i>			
Raspberry Sundae	raspberry	upright, pyramidal	orange, red
Comanche	coral-pink	broad, crowned shrub	orange, red, dk. purple
Sioux	medium pink	small, upright tree	maroon to bright red
Dynamite	cherry red	upright	red – orange
Muskogee	light lavender	broad, small tree	red - orange
Tuscarora	dk. coral-pink	small, vase-shaped tree	orange - red
Pink Velour	fuchsia	upright	dark orange

☛ All cultivars listed above are mildew resistant and reliably hardy in zone 6.