Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories

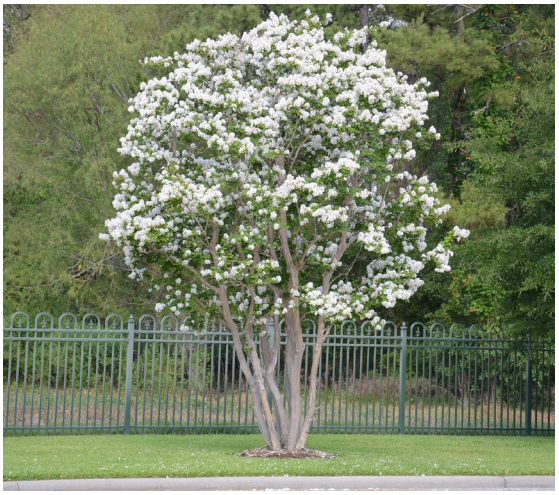
PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT

Crapemyrtle

Crapemyrtles (*Lagerstroemia* species and hybrids) are ornamental shrubs and trees commonly planted in the southeastern United States and some regions of northern states with mild climates. Known for multi-stem forms, smooth or exfoliating bark, and long-lasting colorful blooms, crapemyrtles are used for residential landscape and urban street plantings. Many varieties are available to satisfy flower color, bloom period, and mature size preferences. Flowering usually occurs from mid-summer until fall with bloom colors in shades of purple, white, pink and red.

Lagerstroemia indica

The most common crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) is native to southeast Asia. These plants thrive in full sun and grow best in temperate to mild tropical climates. Crapemyrtles require moist, well-drained soils, although they are tolerant of intermittent drought and flooding conditions once established. Uniformly moist soil conditions are ideal and can be best achieved with appropriately applied mulch in most landscapes. Crapemyrtles are not highly tolerant of salt and may exhibit stress when exposed to saline soil conditions or ocean spray.



Lagerstroemia x 'Natchez'

Multi-stemmed growth forms are popular for crapemyrtles, often having large, gracefully arching branches at maturity. Unfortunately, these trees are commonly topped to reduce height and overall size. Topping is not a recommended

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practice as this can result in structural issues and predispose them to pests and powdery mildew. Crapemyrtle selections should be appropriate for the planting location. Perform structural pruning over time.

Although crapemyrtles are resilient to many abiotic stressors, they are susceptible to several pests and diseases. Common pests include crapemyrtle bark scale, Japanese beetles, and crapemyrtle aphids. The presense of these pests may eventually inhibit flowering and/or healthy growth patterns. High populations of crapemyrtle bark scale and crapemyrtle aphid produce honeydew, which can result in sooty mold growth on the plant and surrounding surfaces. Few diseases severely affect crapemyrtles. Cercospora leaf spot is typically a minor problem, causing premature defoliation of mature leaves. Severe infections can be managed with fungicides if necessary. Powdery mildew is the most common disease and is especially prevalent on leaves on new stems that emerge after topping. Some hybrids have resistance to powdery mildew. It is common for stressed crapemyrtles to exhibit combinations of all these problems. Management solutions are available for these pests and diseases to maintain a healthy and vigorous plant. Proper cultural management, including irrigation, fertilization, and mulching, can reduce plant stress.

Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for Crapemyrtle

Winter

Prune to improve light penetration and air circulation throughout the canopy. Sample soil to monitor nutrients and salt content as needed.

Spring

Fertilize, adjust pH, and amend soil according to soil analysis if required. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease. Monitor and treat for bark scale as immature crawlers become active in early spring.

Summer

Monitor and treat for bark scale, aphids, and Japanese beetles. Monitor soil moisture and adjust irrigation and mulch as needed. Monitor and treat for powdery mildew if present.

Fall

If pest presence was problematic in the growing season, consider a dormant season application to suppress over-wintering pests.