

## Crape Myrtle

Crape myrtles are a colorful summer blooming, utility friendly tree and great for our long hot summers. They tend to be a bush but can be trained into a tree form. You may need to prune soil level branches to keep the tree form.

There are about 50 species of Lagerstroemia, with many new varieties, ranging in many shades of red, pink, white, and purple, all are woody plants, including both deciduous and evergreen varieties, ranging in sizes from dwarfs to 100-foot trees. Most trees sold in our area are under 15 feet, but read the label before you buy. They are chiefly known for their long-lasting summer blooms, but also have beautifully mottled bark and most have colorful fall foliage.

Pruning is important since blooms come on new wood. The question that arises is when and how much to prune. As with all pruning, there are different ideas as to when is best. Certainly, the worse time is when they are blooming. Once the bush is established and shaped as you prefer, less severe trimming should be adequate to maintain the size and shape. My neighbor prunes back to the woody part of the plant leaving a beautiful scaffold of branches for winter viewing. I prune each branch about 1 foot leaving many branches. We both prune in late fall, early winter.

Fall is the best time to plant crape myrtles or any tree. Even though it looks like the plant is doing nothing in the winter, the roots are growing.

For more information about trees, go to; [cecolusa.ucanr.edu](http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu) and click on “landscape for your local environment”.