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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Lagerstroemia x 'Natchez': 'Natchez' Crapemyrtle[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

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Introduction

A long period of striking summer flower color, attractive fall foliage, superior bark exfoliation, good disease and insect resistance and good drought-tolerance all combine to make this Crape-Myrtle a favorite small tree for either formal or informal landscapes. It is highly recommended for planting in urban and suburban areas.



Figure 1. Young *Lagerstroemia x* 'Natchez': 'Natchez' Crapemyrtle
Credit: Ed Gilman

General Information

Scientific name: *Lagerstroemia x*

Pronunciation: lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh

Common name(s): 'Natchez' Crapemyrtle

Family: *Lythraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 10A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: urban tolerant; street without sidewalk; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; shade

Availability: not native to North America

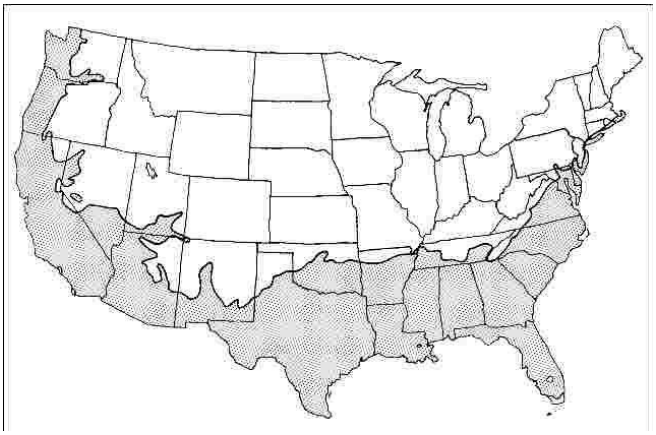

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 30 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: vase

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong, elliptic (oval), obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: orange, red

Fall characteristic: showy



Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: very showy

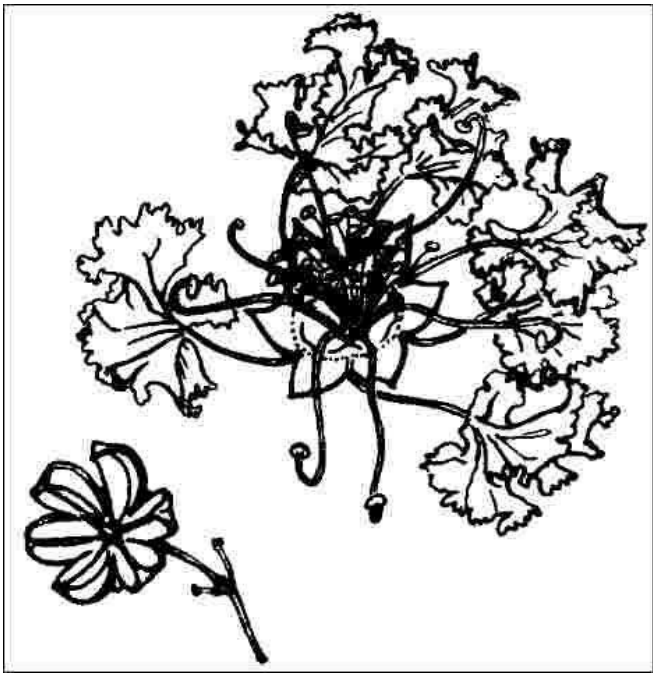

Figure 4. Flower

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval, round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; very showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown, green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

The 6- to 12-inch-long clustered white blooms appear on the tips of branches during late spring and summer in USDA hardiness zones 9 and 10 and summer in other areas. The individual flowers are ruffled and crinkly as to appear made of crepe paper. The smooth, cinnamon-brown to orange, peeling bark and multi-branched, open habit of Crape-Myrtle make it ideal for specimen planting where its bright red-orange to yellow-colored fall leaves add further interest. The tree form is upright-spreading, or vase-shaped, the branches spreading out as they ascend. The tree grows to 30 feet tall with an upright, vase-shaped crown making this well suited for street tree planting. Lower branches droop and will need to be removed as the tree grows taller.

Pruning should be done in late winter or early in the spring before growth begins because it is easier to see which branches to prune. New growth can be pinched during the growing season to increase branchiness and flower number. Pruning methods vary from topping to cutting Crape-Myrtle nearly to the ground each spring to the removal of dead wood and old flower stalks only. Topping creates several long, thin branches from each cut which droop down under the weight of the flowers. This practice disfigures the nice trunk and branch structure. Lower branches are often thinned to show off the trunk form and color. Pruning is not needed for good growth. Remove the spent flower heads to encourage a second flush of flowers and to prevent formation of the brown fruits. Since cultivars are now available in a wide range of growth heights, severe pruning should not be necessary to control size. Severe pruning can stimulate basal sprouting which can become a constant nuisance, requiring regular removal. Some Crape-Myrtle trees sprout from the base of the trunk and roots even without severe heading, but `Natchez appears to be much less prone to this problem.

Crape-Myrtle grows best in full sun with rich, moist soil but will tolerate less hospitable positions in the landscape just as well, once it becomes established. It grows well in limited soil spaces in urban areas such as along boulevards, in parking lots, and in small pavement cutouts if provided with some irrigation. They tolerate clay and alkaline soil well. However, the flowers of some selections may stain car paint. `Natchez' shows perhaps the best resistance to powdery mildew and crape myrtle aphids of any of the cultivars of crape myrtle. There are other new cultivars (many developed by the USDA) available which are resistant to powdery mildew and aphids.

Many other cultivars of Crape-Myrtle are available: hybrid `Acoma', 14 to 16 feet tall, white flowers, purple-red fall foliage, mildew resistant; hybrid `Biloxi', 25 feet tall, pale pink blooms, orange-red fall foliage, hardy and mildew resistant; `Cherokee', 10 to 12 feet, bright red flowers; `Powhatan', 14 to 20 feet, clear yellow fall foliage, medium purple flowers. The hybrid cultivars `Muskogee', 24 feet tall, light lavender flowers, and `Tuscarora', 16

feet tall, dark coral pink blooms, are hybrids between *Lagerstroemia indica* and *Lagerstroemia fauriei* and have greater resistance to mildew. The cultivar `Crape Myrtlettes' have the same color range as the species but only grow to three to four feet high. The National Arboretum releases are generally superior because they have been selected for their disease resistance. These releases may prove more resistant to powdery mildew in the Deep South, although further testing needs to be done to confirm this.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed.

Pests

Mostly resistant to aphids.

Diseases

Powdery mildew can severely affect Crape-Myrtle but `Natchez' is highly resistant.

[1] This document is ENH-507, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. ..Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

[2] Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus, UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, UF/IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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