



Crapemyrtle

Lagerstroemia indica

Secondary Names:

Crape Myrtle, Crepemyrtle

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native:

Firewise:



Tree Description:

Perhaps the most common small landscape tree or large shrub planted in Texas, crapemyrtle is usually multi-trunked with smooth, muscular limbs, grows to 20 feet tall and 15 feet wide, with mature trunks ranging from 4" to 12" in diameter.

Range/Site Description:

Native to China and Korea, it performs well as a landscape tree across most of Texas. It tolerates a wide range of site conditions, including drought and slightly alkaline soils.

Leaf:

Simple, alternate, 1.5" to 3" long, oval to oblong, thin, blunt-tipped, without teeth along leaf edge. Some cultivars turn red or orange in the fall.

Flower:

Showy spikes of white, pink, red, or purple flowers appear throughout the summer, each made up of petals that resemble crepe-paper. Not fragrant.

Fruit:

An upright spike of round 0.5" diameter green fruits develops in late summer, drying to brown spherical capsules that open to release the winged seeds up to 0.25" long.

Bark:

Smooth, muscular, in irregular patches ranging from tan to chocolate-colored, peeling during the growing season into long, thin strips that fall away to reveal new bark beneath.

Wood:

Hard, dense, light-colored; no commercial uses. Major economic value is in the nursery trade; many cultivars are available, with selections from the National Arboretum the most pest-resistant.

Similar Species:

Queen's crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia speciosa*) and Japanese crapemyrtle (*L. fauriei*) are similar, but have opposite leaves.

Interesting Facts:

A common - but incorrect - pruning practice of removing the entire top of the tree each winter is called "crape murder."