



Crape Myrtle

Care and Maintenance Fact Sheet



Natchez

What to Expect

In North Carolina, we have gardens bursting with colorful, sun-loving crape myrtles. A warm-climate tree or shrub, depending upon the variety you choose, crape myrtles are a shot of color in the midst of a green lawn or a showstopping hedge of pigmented personality in the summer landscape. Crape myrtles are available in a range of mature heights, from 30-foot trees to dwarf varieties that are full grown at only one foot tall. The most important thing to remember about planting a crape myrtle is to choose the right size variety for the right place in your landscape. By choosing the tree that best fits your desired size at full maturity, no regular pruning will be

needed to maintain it, making it a worry-free but colorful part of a landscape plan.

Several varieties of crape myrtle are tried and true in North Carolina because they are widely available in our area and do not suffer from humidity-induced powdery mildew. These include the larger 30-foot-tall Natchez, with white summer flowers, yellow and orange-red autumn leaves, and cinnamon-colored bark that sheds to add interest all year; the mid-sized watermelon-hued Tuskarora, which matures at 20 feet; the mid-sized purple Catawba which grows to 10-15 feet in height; and the dazzling red flowers of Red Rocket and Dynamite, which are slower growing but still top out at 12-



Catawba

14 feet tall. Please note that bark shedding is normal for these tree trunks after the first 2-3 years of growing and adds interest to the winter landscape.

Smaller dwarf varieties such as pink-blooming Pocomoke only grow up to two feet tall and make good mass

plantings and are even exceptional bloomers when placed in pots to move around and fill in the landscape with color where needed.

How to Water Large Transplants

Drip irrigation is the best solution for maintaining the perfect level of moisture for your crape myrtle, assuming the irrigation system works well and is regularly inspected for signs of damage by gnawing wildlife. If your transplanted tree is 10 feet or taller, water it 3-5 gallons of water three times per week during the main growing season of March 15 to October 31 for the first two years after it has been transplanted. After establishment, crape myrtles do not need consistent irrigation and only need to be watered during extremely long dry spells lasting one month or more. Please note that crape myrtles prefer to be moved during warmer weather in late spring. It is normal for them to defoliate when moved, but they will re-foliate before the first frost.

How to Fertilize and Prune

No need to fertilize or prune crape myrtles. When the right sized tree is placed in the right location, they are one of the most low-maintenance trees in the landscape. In fact, pruning will ruin the tree's natural

vase shaped trunk and weaken its health.

