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

Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida’s Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

Uses: 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; urban tolerant; highway median; shade

Availability: not native to North America

General Information
Scientific name: Lagerstroemia indica
Pronunciation: lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh-IN-dih-kuh
Common name(s): Crapemyrtle
Family: Lythraceae
USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 9A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America

Figure 1. Young Lagerstroemia indica: Crapemyrtle
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Figure 2. Range


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**Description**

Height: 10 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: elliptic (oval), obovate, oblong  
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, yellow  
Fall characteristic: showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Flower**

Flower color: white/cream/gray, pink, purple, lavender, red  
Flower characteristics: very showy

![Figure 4. Flower](image)

**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; 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: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: high  
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

**Other**

Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: yes  
Outstanding tree: no  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant  
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

Available in all shades of white, pink, red, or lavender, the 6- to 12-inch-long clustered 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, peeling bark and multi-branched, open habit of Crape-Myrtle make it ideal for specimen planting where its bright red to orange-colored fall leaves add further interest. Most forms of the tree are upright, upright-spreading, or vase-shaped, spreading out as they ascend. Most tree types grow to 20 to 25 feet tall although there are more dwarf types available. The upright, vase-shaped crown makes the tall-growing selections well-suited for street tree planting.

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. You can 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 or topping can stimulate basal sprouting which can become a constant nuisance, requiring regular removal. Some trees sprout from the base of the trunk and roots even without severe heading. This can be a maintenance nuisance.

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 until well established. They tolerate clay and alkaline soil well. However, the flowers of some selections may stain car paint. Insect pests are few but Crape-Myrtle is susceptible to powdery mildew damage, especially when planted in some shade or when the leaves are kept moist. There are new cultivars (many developed by the USDA) available which are resistant to powdery mildew and aphids.

Many 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 ‘Natchez’, 30 feet tall, pure white flowers, resistant to aphids, one of the best Crape-Myrtles; ‘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-Myrtlelettes’ 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
Aphids often infest the new growth causing an unsightly but harmless sooty mold to grow on the foliage. Heavy aphid infestations cause a heavy black sooty mold which detracts from the tree's appearance.

### Diseases
Powdery mildew can severely affect Crape-Myrtle. Select resistant cultivars and hybrids to avoid this disease. Leaf spots are only a minor concern and do not require treatment.

### Literature Cited