**Lagerstroemia x ‘Natchez’: ‘Natchez’ Crapemyrtle**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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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.

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**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

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**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

**Flower**

Flower color: white/cream/gray  
Flower characteristics: very showy

**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.