

How to Prune Crape Myrtle *Lagerstroemia indica*



Correct pruning
Remove pink colored
branches

Orband

Remove crossing

branches. Rubbing branches cause wounds for insect and disease entry.

Remove narrow crotch angles.

Wider angles are stronger and provide better support and weather resistance.

Pollarding causes weakened branches and reduces tree vigor.

Remove suckers at the base
Suckers are quick-growing shoots that drain the plant's resources. Aphids feed heavily on suckers.



Improper pruning
Already pruned

Orband

- Prune in February because crape myrtle is a late-budding (May) plant that bears flowers on current season's growth.

The tree's branching structure is easily seen at this time and allows for proper pruning.

- Crape myrtles can be pruned to a single trunk or multiple trunk of 3-5 strong stems.
This is a personal preference. Regardless of stem numbers, allow crape myrtle to grow as a tree.
- Use sharp tools. Crape myrtle wood is very dense. Leave the branch collar intact-do not flush cut.
- Do not use pruning paint or any form of wound sealant. A proper cut will seal itself.
- For further information, refer to Cooperative Extension pruning series publications: Ask for VA.
Cooperative Extension publications 430-455, 430-456, 430-457, 430-458, 430-459, 430-460, 430-461, and 430-462. Available at local Extension Offices.



Remove rubbing branches

If branches in the canopy are rubbing, remove the weaker branch.

Increase air circulation

Remove branches growing inward to allow for light and air penetration and reduce pesticide use.

Flowers should be distributed throughout the entire tree.

The bloom should **not** be located only at the tip ends of the branches. All small spurs of this plant can flower; not just those at the highest points. Trees bloom on current season's growth.

Orband
Crape myrtle is a multi-season tree with handsome exfoliating bark in winter, light green leaves in early summer, profuse blooming during the summer, and scarlet and yellow leaves in fall. Proper pruning will enhance and maintain it's natural appearance throughout the year. Proper pruning distributes the bloom throughout the entire tree.



If you want a shrub form crape myrtle, select from:

Semidwarf (less than 10')

- 'Acoma'
- 'Hopi'
- 'Pecos'
- 'Prairie Lace'
- 'Seminole'
- 'Zuni'

Dwarf (less than 5')

- 'Centennial'
- 'Hope'
- 'Ocmulgee'
- 'Victor'

Other selections from the National Arboretum, Contact your local Extension Office for more information.

Orband
Completed Pruning of Crape Myrtle
Multi-stemmed trunk pictured
Ends of branches are not pollarded
(Cut as stubs)