



Lagerstroemia fauriei Japanese Crape-Myrtle¹

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese Crape-Myrtle is very similar to the more common Crape-Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) except it has smaller, white blossoms and larger leaves which show no appreciable fall color change (Fig. 1). It is also larger in size than the common Crape-Myrtle. Japanese Crape-Myrtle is a slow-growing, deciduous tree which reaches 35 to 50 feet in height and has leathery, four-inch-long leaves. The flaking, peeling, red and brown bark (on trees trained as single or multi-trunked) is especially attractive in the winter garden, when the leaves have fallen. With lower branches removed, as is often the case with Crape-Myrtle, bark is also very showy during the entire year. The upright, vase-shaped crown makes Japanese Crape-Myrtle well-suited for street tree planting.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Lagerstroemia fauriei*

Pronunciation: lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh FAR-ee-eye

Common name(s): Japanese Crape-Myrtle

Family: *Lythraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 10A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

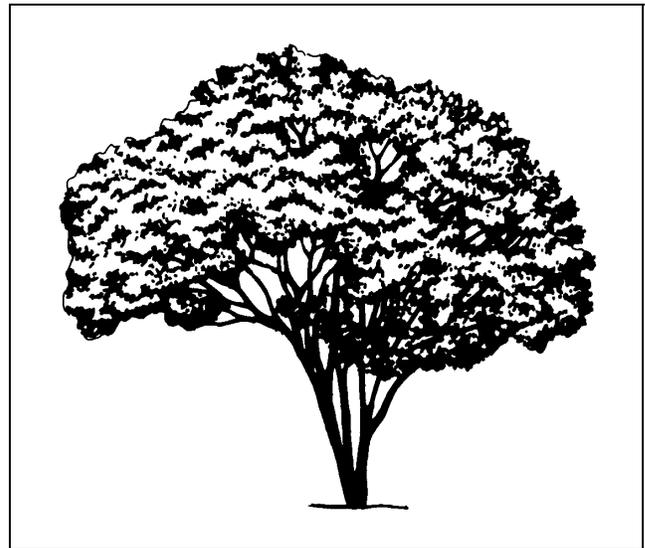


Figure 1. Middle-aged Japanese Crape-Myrtle.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 35 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette; symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; very showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

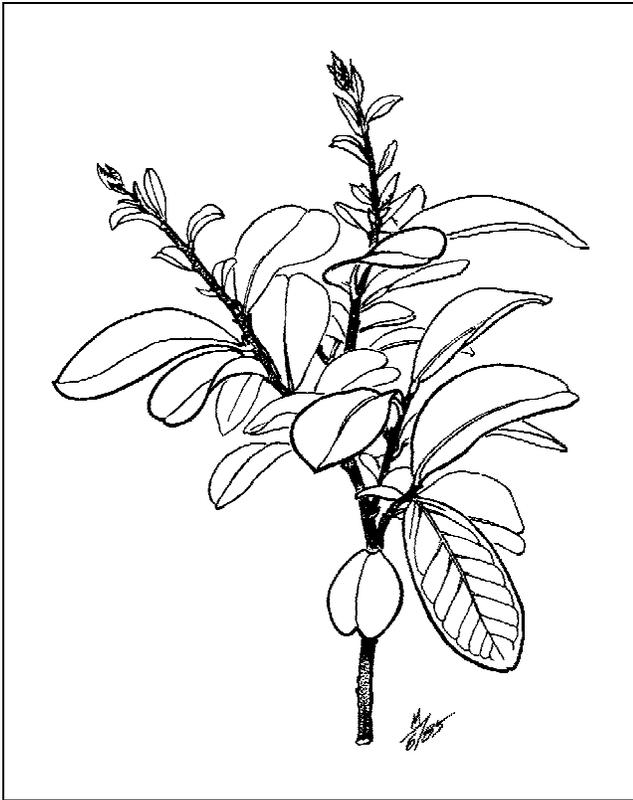


Figure 3. Foliage of Japanese Crape-Myrtle.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Pruning should be done in late winter or early in the spring before growth begins because it is easier to see which branches require pruning. New growth can be pinched during the growing season, when the tree is very small, to increase branchiness and flower number but this is not needed to develop good form. The tree flowers very nicely without pruning. 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.

Japanese Crape-Myrtle would make a wonderful street tree for residential or commercial landscapes.

Planted on 20-foot-centers, it would form a canopy over the sidewalk but the crown does not spread enough to canopy the street. Choose single-trunked trees for street planting, or well-formed, multi-trunked specimens with no embedded bark. The outstanding bark character makes it one of the best specimen trees for the South. This is likely to become a very popular tree.

Japanese 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 will probably grow well in limited soil spaces in urban areas such as along boulevards and in parking lots.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed.

The cultivar 'Fantasy' will become more available, 50 feet tall, white flowers, extremely showy flower display even on old trees, three-foot diameter trunk 35 years after planting, resistant to powdery mildew.

Pests

No pests are of major concern. Aphids probably infest the new growth to a certain extent causing a harmless but unsightly sooty mold to grow on the foliage.

Diseases

Although powdery mildew can severely affect most other Crape-Myrtles, Japanese Crape-Myrtle is very resistant.