



Lagerstroemia x 'Cherokee' 'Cherokee' Crapemyrtle¹

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INTRODUCTION

A long period of striking summer flower color, attractive fall foliage, and good drought-tolerance all combine to make this cultivar of Crape-Myrtle a favorite very small tree or large shrub for either formal or informal landscapes (Fig. 1). Most are seen seven to nine feet tall with a similar spread. It is highly recommended for planting in urban areas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Lagerstroemia* x 'Cherokee'

Pronunciation: lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh

Common name(s): 'Cherokee' Crapemyrtle

Family: *Lythraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 9A (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; near a deck or patio; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

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

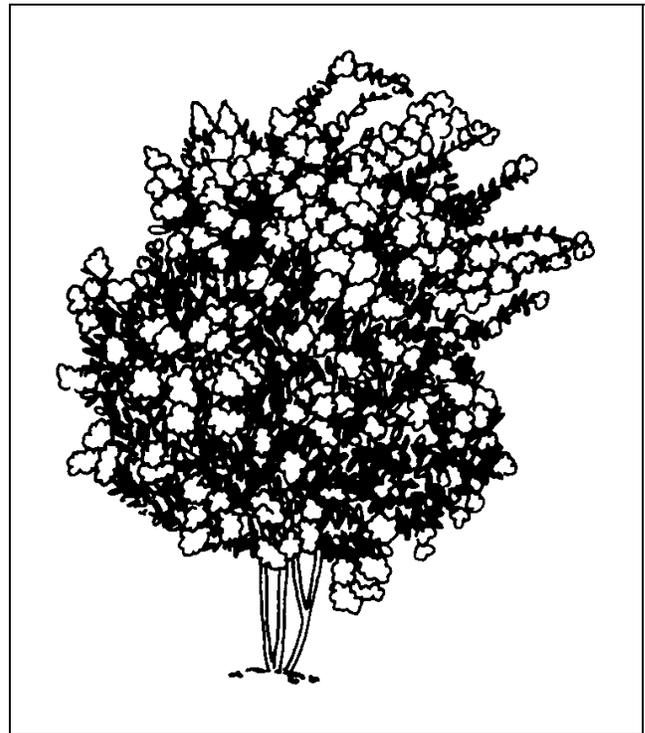


Figure 1. Young 'Cherokee' Crapemyrtle.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

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

Crown shape: vase shape

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-345, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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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; less than 2 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** orange; red; yellow
- Fall characteristic:** showy

Flower

- Flower color:** red
- Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; 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; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; 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

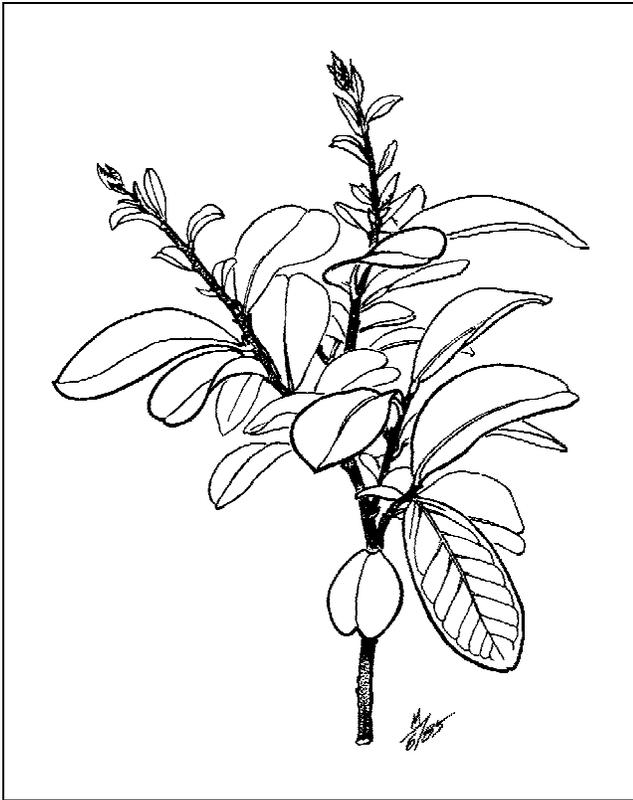


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Cherokee' Crape-myrtle.

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: not particularly outstanding

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

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The 6- to 12-inch-long clustered bright red blooms appear on the tips of branches during late spring and summer in USDA hardiness zones 9 and 10 and summer in other areas. If flowers appear pink instead of red, then you have not purchased the true 'Cherokee' cultivar. The individual flowers are ruffled and crinkly as to appear made of crepe paper. The smooth, peeling bark and multi-branched, open habit make it ideal for specimen planting where its bright red to orange-colored fall leaves add further interest.

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. 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 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.

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. Insect pests are few (except for the Crape-Myrtle aphid) and Crape-Myrtle is susceptible to powdery mildew damage, especially when planted in some shade or when the leaves are kept moist. There are other new cultivars (many developed by the USDA) available which are resistant to powdery mildew.

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; 'Powhatan', 14 to 20 feet, clear yellow fall foliage, medium purple flowers. The hybrid cultivars 'Natchez', 30 feet tall, pure white flowers, '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.

Propagation is by cuttings.

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.