UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) Cultivars

The crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia sp*.), native to SE Asia, is a very popular woody ornamental flowering shrub/small tree throughout southeastern US landscapes. The fact that crapemyrtles have the potential for a long flowering period (up to 120 days) in the summer has given rise to the popularity of this plant. Today we are fortunate to be able to pick from a wide variety of cultivars that offer us an assortment of ornamental characteristics. Breeding programs in USA and Europe have generated, in the last three decades, a wide range of plant sizes (from 2' dwarfs to 30' tall trees), growth habits (broad, upright, weeping, etc..), cold hardiness (Zones 6-10), disease resistance (powdery mildew and leaf spot) and a wide range of bark characteristics, flower color and **fall color.**

Out of all the *Lagerstroemia* species, *L. indica* is the most widely know and cultivated. Breeding programs utilize other species including *L. fauriei* and *L. speciosa*. The rather obscure and perhaps nearly extinct *L. fauriei*, found only in the island of Yakushima, Japan has brought the most significant developments in the breeding of modern ornamental *Lagerstroemia* cultivars, contributing mainly with powdery mildew resistance, cold hardiness and attractive bark. Many cultivars have been introduced by the U.S. National Arboretum (http://www.usna.usda.gov/) including: 'Pocomoke', 'Acoma', 'Caddo', 'Hopi', 'Tonto', 'Cherokee', 'Osage', 'Sioux', 'Tuskegee', 'Tuscarora', 'Biloxi', 'Kiowa', 'Miami', and 'Natchez'. Introductions by the University of Arkansas include: 'Centennial', 'Hope', and 'Victor'.

Pruning:

Dehorning (or **topping**) is, sadly, a widespread pruning practice applied to many crapemyrtles. Fortunately the plant can withstand such abuse. **Proper selection of the right cultivar (i.e. size and growth habit) should take priority over improper pruning if this is justified by space considerations.** Contrary to popular beliefs, excessive pruning in crapemyrtles does not induce heavier flowering, but rather detracts from having it due to the likely removal of significant plant carbon and nutrient (i.e. food) reserves.

Proper pruning of the shrub or tree types includes selectively removing branches back to a branch (**thinning**). Crapemyrtle flowers on new stems/wood so plants can be pruned until late spring without reducing flowering that summer.

Diseases:

There are two serious and common fungal diseases on crapemyrtle: **powdery mildew** (*Erysiphe lagerstroemiae*) and ***Cercospora* leaf spot**. In Arkansas, the more serious disease is leaf spot which can cause susceptible varieties to be nearly defoliated by late August. While chemical controls could be used, we encourage planting varieties

that are less susceptible to both of these diseases. A good fact sheet on the two diseases is available: http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1047/ANR-1047.pdf

Insects:

Although metallic green flea beetle (*Altica* sp.) is noted as a serious insect pest in many southeastern states it does not appear to be a serious problem on crapemyrtle in Arkansas yet.

Arkansas is fortunate to have two individuals that I credit with introducing this fine plant to our state in the 70's. Recognition needs to go to Ewa and Joan Nelson of Morningside Nursery (www.morningsidenursery.com) in Morrilton and Stan Brown of Blossomberry Nursery in Russellville.

Other information:
http://dallas.tamu.edu/woody/cmyrtle/