



FBMG Help Desk
Question of the Week

I keep seeing references to Crape Murder! This seems to be a huge subject of discussion. Do I have to trim or prune my Crape Myrtle Tree???

Answer: Not necessarily..

The Crape Myrtle A Wonderful Performer

Lilac of the South

*the bark of a mature crape myrtle tree
can be quite stunning*



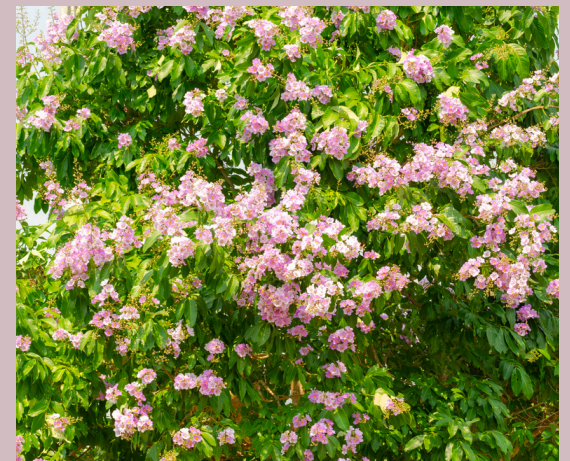
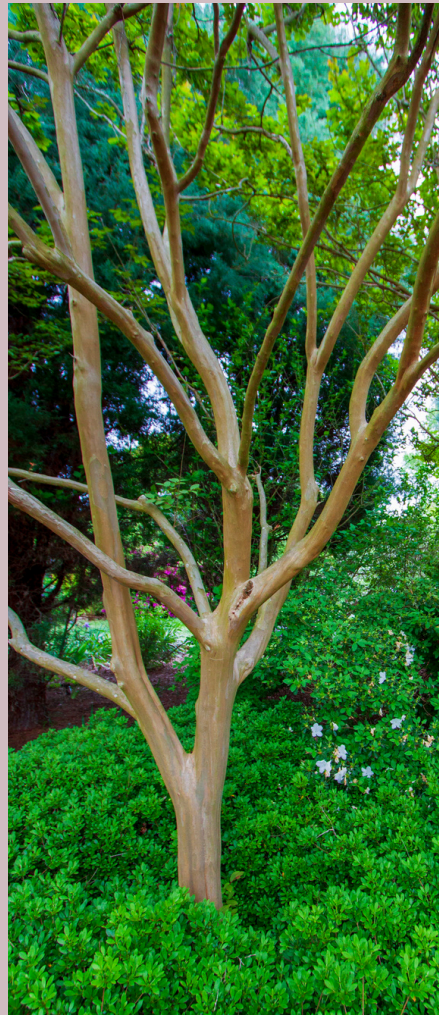
*Crape Myrtles are
relatively low maintenance,
prolific bloomers, with a
blooming season lasting up
to 120 days.*

Have a Reason to Prune Remove Branches that are:

- *dead or damaged*
- *rubbing together*
- *low lying and may pose a hazard*
- *rubbing together*
- *rubbing against buildings*

Remove

- *suckers from around the bottom*



The Lagerstromia Basham Party Pink,
is a Texas Superstar



If Pruning is Necessary



Proper Tools and Guidance are a Must

You will need clean, sharp tools to be able to make clean cuts.

It is advisable to keep your feet on the ground while pruning.

Proper Pruning can Help the Tree By:

- removing dead or injured branches as well as branches that may cause injury to the tree, property, or people

Improper Pruning can Injure the Tree By:

- Reducing it's ability to produce food
- Sun scald can occur to the interior branches that were protected from the lost branches.
- New branches though plentiful are often very weak and don't fare well in storms.

Follow a Guide on Where and How to make the cuts:

- The Texas A&M Forest Service has amazing articles such as Pruning Mature Trees, Pruning Young Trees, Crape Myrtle Bark Scale under their Learn and Explore e library section on their website <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu>
<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/elibrary>

When in doubt call in an arborist:

- You can search for one at www.treesaregood.org

Know Why You are Pruning

Prune For a Reason

Of all the gardening tasks pruning is one of the most baffling. As a result, many plants are pruned beyond recognition and damaged annually by well-meaning gardeners.



Believing it is necessary, the practice of lopping the tops off of crape myrtle trees or ‘topping’ AKA ‘Crape Murder’ become an all too common annual ritual by some gardeners.

Pruning causes Wounds

- Wounds especially new wounds provide opportunity for infection and insect entry.
- Improper pruning can cause poor growth, permanent scarring, a weakened plant, a shortened the lifespan, and poor performance
- Prune for a Reason



Don't be a copycat

Just Say No To Needless Pruning

Topping Can Lead to Tree Decline

Inviting Disease and Insects

Possible long term injuries to the tree can occur thus shortening it's lifespan.



Included but not limited to are:

- Reducing the ability of the tree to produce food
- Sun scald can occur to the interior branches once protected from those lost.
- New branches though plentiful are often very weak and can't fare well in storms.
- More susceptible to insect attack and disease
- Insect Crape Myrtle Bark Scale is attracted to open wounds

Inviting to a Variety of Wildlife

Year-round visual interest!

A source of food and shelter.

Pollinators can be found on the blooms throughout the blooming season. Birds can be found eating the berries and their nests are often found in the branches of crape myrtles.



The Crape Myrtle provides a source of interest in the landscape throughout the year.



*Do you have questions
about your home
landscape and plants?*

*Contact the Fort Bend
Master Gardener Help Desk*

*Email:
FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu*

*Phone:
281-341-7068*

*The Help Desk is manned
Monday thru Friday,
9am-Noon*

*Pruning with a Purpose.pub (tamu.edu)
Prune with a Purpose - Garden.org*

*Crape Myrtle Pruning | Home & Garden Information Center
(clemson.edu)*

*Principles & Practices for Pruning Trees | Home & Garden
Information Center (clemson.edu)*

Tree Topping.pdf (illinois.gov)

*Question: Is Tree "Topping" A Good Method, And What
Happens To The Tree After It Is Topped? | Purdue Extension
Forestry & Natural Resources*

*New Texas Superstar introduced: Basham's Party Pink crape
myrtle - AgriLife Today (tamu.edu)*

*Avoid Aggressively Pruning Crape Myrtles | A Fruitful
Discussion (uga.edu)*

Texas State Shrub | Crape Myrtle (statesymbolsusa.org)

*Stop the Crape Murder by Greg Grant: Dept. of
Agriculture*

*Pruning Crape Myrtle - Gardening Solutions - University
of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
(ufl.edu)*

*www.si.edu/stories/crape-myrtle-trees-arent-native-us-
bird*

*Pruning Landscape Trees (psu.edu) Pruning Landscape
Trees*

*Crape Myrtle Pruning | Home & Garden Information
Center (clemson.edu)
Karen Russ, ©HGIC, Clemson Extension*

*"Crape Murder" is a term credited to a 1997 article in
Southern Living magazine*

*https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/elibrary
http://tfsweb.tamu.edu
www.treesaregood.org*

ree Topping.pdf (illinois.gov)

*Crape Myrtle Bark Scale | Home & Garden Information
Center (clemson.edu)*

*Follow Proper Pruning Techniques - Earth-Kind®
Landscaping Earth-Kind® Landscaping (tamu.edu)*

