

# ABIDE A WHILE

GARDEN BOUTIQUE



## Tip Sheet: Crape Myrtle Tree

With its blooms and attractive bark, this flowering tree will please the eye year round.

### WHERE & WHEN TO PLANT

- The ideal planting site is in a well prepared, well-drained soil with full sun exposure and good air circulation.
- Crape Myrtles vary greatly in size (anywhere from 6' to 30' tall and wide). Be sure to choose the proper variety to fit the location in which you are planting to prevent need for sever pruning.

### CARE

**WATERING:** The tree should be thoroughly drenched immediately after planting. Young crape myrtles should be watered 3x a week during hot weather. Maintain 3-5" of mulch at the base of the tree (keep off of trunk) to help retain moisture in the soil as well as to deter weeds.

**FERTILIZE:** Use a slow-release fertilizer such as Espoma Plant-Tone or Osmocote. Apply per bag directions.

**PRUNING:** For small plants, it is good to remove the seed heads in late winter or early spring, before growth begins. This is recommended only if they are within reach. Once it becomes a tall, mature plant, allow nature to take its course - the seed heads will drop, the plant will bloom and the natural grace of the plant will be retained.

Crape Myrtles will produce plenty of flowers without any pruning. If pruning is necessary to stimulate new growth, prune in late winter or early spring. On smaller plants, encourage a second bloom in summer by pruning flowers immediately after they fade.

The practice of chopping off the tops of crape myrtles, known as 'topping' or 'crape murder' is, unfortunately, commonplace. Severe pruning of crape myrtles both diminishes the plants naturally graceful branching but also promotes insects and disease.

**WIT AND WISDOM:** Varieties named for American Indian tribes are most disease resistant.