

# Pruning Crapemyrtles

We often use Crapemyrtles in the landscape because they bloom all summer long. We also value them for their peeling bark, fall color and the grace of their natural form. They are as tough as they are beautiful.

The practice of chopping off the tops of Crapemyrtles has become very commonplace. Many people believe that it is required to promote flowering; some prune because the plant is too large for the space provided; others see their neighbors doing it and feel the need to follow suit. There are some instances in which heavy pruning is necessary, but light pruning is usually all that is needed. The type and amount of pruning depends on the desired shape and size of the plant.

The Crapemyrtle can be a low-maintenance plant, and the best way to ensure this is to choose the cultivar that best suits your landscape needs before planting. There are many new cultivars in different sizes and colors. The dwarf (3 to 6 feet) and semi-dwarf (7 to 15 feet) selections now available make it easy to choose the right size plant for a certain space. If careful consideration is given to the projected size of the mature plant, a selection can be found that will not outgrow its boundaries and can be allowed to display its graceful beauty with minimal pruning.

Crapemyrtles do not require heavy pruning to promote bloom. Flowers are produced on new growth. It will produce flowers without any pruning, although it may bloom more profusely if at least lightly pruned. Pruning in late winter or early spring will stimulate vigorous new growth in the spring. Encourage a second bloom in summer by pruning flowers immediately after they fade.



Severe pruning is a harmful practice that destroys the grace and beauty of the tree. It also stresses the tree, making it more susceptible to diseases.



A common misconception is that a tree will flower better if severely pruned. This photo shows the flowering of a pruned (left) versus an unpruned tree.



When thinning out branches, remove outside the branch collar which is a swollen area where the branch joins the trunk.

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