

Pruning Crapemyrtles

This plant prefers hot, sunny climates and in South Carolina many varieties will grow to tree-size proportions. It is important that tree types are sited where they have a large area to spread. When given an ideal location these tree types should be allowed to develop their natural style without whacking off their tops.

To develop a tree shape, remove all limbs growing from ground level except the three to five strongest limbs. As the tree matures, remove lower, lateral branches ("limbing up") one-third to halfway up the height of the plant. Remove branches that are crossing or rubbing against each other and shoots growing into the center of the canopy. Make your cuts to a side branch or close to the trunk at the branch collar. Head back (heading back is removing a part of a branch right above a leaf or a visible bud) wayward and unbranched limbs.

As the tree grows taller, remove lower branches as needed. Remove any future growth from the ground to retain the desirable trunk structure. This basal sprouting may occur whether the tree is being pruned or not. Pull these out when succulent instead of pruning them.

You may feel the need to improve the appearance by removing the seed heads in late winter or early spring before growth begins. This is recommended only if they are within reach. Once this becomes a tall, mature plant, allow nature to take its course - the seedheads will drop, the plant will bloom, and the natural grace of the plant will be retained.



When removing seedheads or heading back a branch, make the cut just above a lateral bud.



This Crapemyrtle is in need of some pruning. There are too many trunks, and the canopy needs to be thinned.



The same tree after pruning: The canopy has been opened up to allow more sunlight, and the lower limbs and suckers have been removed to develop the trunk structure.

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