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Carolinians
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening,
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment &
Protect the
Environment

NC STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Crape Myrtles Enhance Our Southern Summers

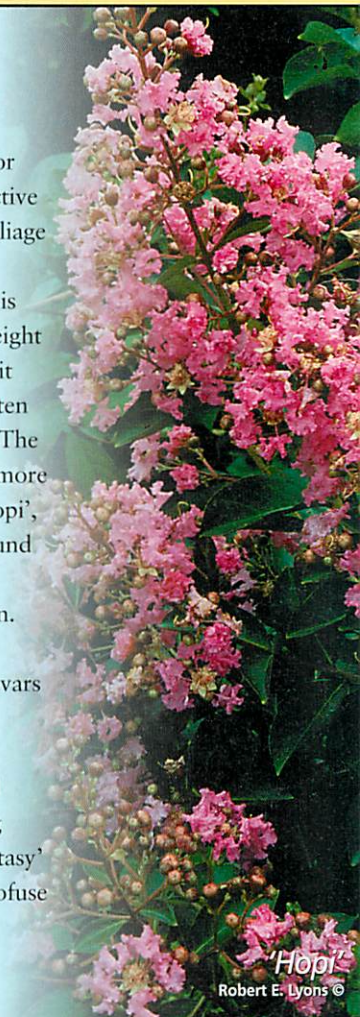
Our Carolina summers wouldn't be the same without the blooms of the crape myrtle. Long known by many as the flower of the South, crape myrtles perform beautifully throughout most of the state.

Crape myrtle, or *Lagerstroemia*, is a favorite small tree or large shrub for many Southern gardeners. It is a versatile flowering plant with many attractive characteristics such as excellent bark color, texture, form and shape, fall foliage color and seed pods which persist in the winter.

This specimen tree, ranging from less than 3 feet to more than 12 feet, is well-suited to urban gardens and street planters. The ultimate small tree height is usually below 30 feet and the roots can exist in restricted areas, making it ideal for use under utility lines. To accent its beauty, many homeowners often plant in a garden setting with an underplanting of a favorite groundcover. The cooler, zone 6 regions of the state are better off planting hybrids with the more cold-hardy *L. fauriei* in their background. Look for cultivar names like 'Hopi', 'Acoma' and 'Natchez'. The more commonly planted *L. indica* varieties found in lower elevations of the state will not reliably survive in the mountains.

Plant the tree at least 10 feet from walls in well-drained soil and full sun. They do not flower well in partial shade and not at all in heavy shade. Powdery mildew can be a problem on the old cultivars but many new cultivars are disease resistant.

Visit the JC Raulston Arboretum (JCRA) at NC State University to see two unique cultivars of the species *Lagerstroemia fauriei*: 'Townhouse' and 'Fantasy'. 'Townhouse' has dark mahogany-red bark and profuse flowering during the summer. It is also noted for its striking winter appearance. 'Fantasy' is named for its elegant stature, beautiful rusty-red exfoliating bark and profuse display of white flowers in the summer. Visit the JCRA in person or at www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum to explore their impressive collection of crape myrtles. *Willie Earl Wilson*



'Hopi'
Robert E. Lyons ©

inside

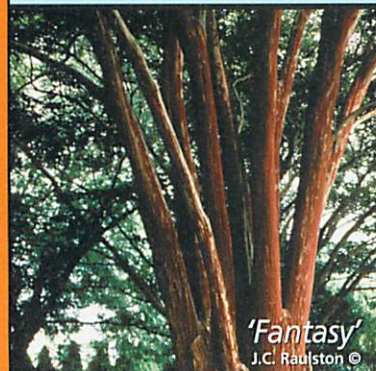
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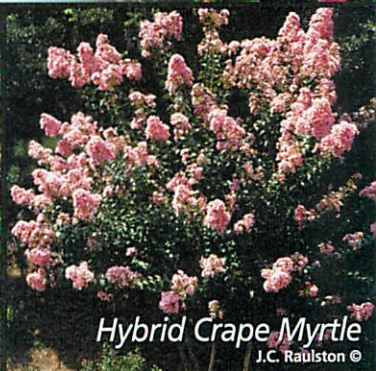
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'Fantasy'
J.C. Raulston ©



'Fantasy'
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Hybrid Crape Myrtle
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Mark Your Calendar for Inspiration!

The Garden Conservancy Open Days Program in Charlotte is a great opportunity to visit seven private gardens that will be open to the public September 14 and 15. The Garden Conservancy is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1989 to preserve America's finest gardens and to open the gates of these gardens for public education and enjoyment. Among the seven private gardens open to the public to benefit these preservation efforts are several belonging to Extension's Master GardenersSM, including the garden featured in this month's Garden Spot on the back page. For details, call Lindie Wilson at (704) 374-1650 or Ann Armstrong at (704) 366-0954.

Make Your Landscape Waterwise

In North Carolina, we are fortunate to have lakes, streams, rivers and coastal waters that contribute to the quality of life, making this a great place to live. In order to conserve and protect these resources, make your landscape waterwise.

Analyze Your Soil

Get your hands dirty. In order to select the right fertilizers, additives and amendments, learn the characteristics of your soil. Soil testing by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is a great place to start. Their report will tell you about lime and nutrient deficiencies.

Improve the structure of your soils. Never work soil when it is wet. This destroys soil structure and leads to compaction. Take a small handful of soil and make it into a ball. If you drop this ball and it stays intact then the soil is probably too wet.

Till the soil as deeply as possible when installing new plants. This reduces compaction, allows oxygen to get deep down into the soil profile and facilitates new plant establishment.

Amend soils with compost. This is magic stuff. Compost holds enough moisture for water-needy plants and, at the same time, improves soil structure to allow excess water to drain. Don't just add organic amendments to the planting hole; apply 3 or 4 inches to the soil surface and incorporate it into the soil.

You can always buy your way to success. Topsoil from a reputable soil contractor is a wonderful thing. Use this new soil to raise the grade of existing beds by 10 or 12 inches.

Study the drainage characteristics of the site. Few landscapes are perfectly flat. This means that water flows over the surface of the soil when heavy rains occur. Know the location of the hot, dry areas as well as the wet, shady spots. Take notes. All of this information will be important in locating plants in the landscape.

Limit Fertilizer Use

Apply full rates of fertilizer to plants you want to grow larger. Mature plants need only occasional fertilization in order to maintain health.

Minimize Turf Areas

Match your family needs to the landscape features. Be realistic. If you use your lawn for parties, soccer or chipping practice, then keep the turf. Otherwise, transform that sea of green into landscape beds that are natural areas or low-

maintenance groundcovers, perennials, shrubs or ornamental grasses. If you have tons of turf, consider a drought-tolerant species such as Bermuda, centipede or zoysia. Turf requires significant amounts of water, fertilizer and time.

Choose Low-Maintenance, Drought-Tolerant Plants

To learn about plants that are well-adapted to your local gardening climate, visit public gardens, your county Cooperative Extension Center or Web site and garden centers. Acquiring knowledge can be fun. Join a garden club or volunteer as one of Extension's Master GardenersSM. You will find that gardening brings out the best in all of us. Here is one Web site with a complete list of tough plants: www.ces.ncsu.edu. Click on Extension Departments. Go to Horticultural Science and then Consumer/Home Horticulture.

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch

Organic mulches on top of landscape beds conserve moisture and moderate soil temperature, allowing for rapid root development. Mulches also prevent crusting of the soil surface, allowing rainfall to penetrate soils and reducing the need for irrigation.

Sweep Fertilizer from Driveways and Sidewalks

Nitrogen and phosphorus in fertilizers swept into a gutter or storm drain will go directly into our rivers. There is no water treatment plant that cleans this water. In addition, never dump oil, paint or solvents into the gutter.

Use Pervious Surfaces When Possible

Impervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt do not allow water infiltration. This causes rapid runoff and greater storm water management problems. Gravel or paver products such as turfstone slow runoff, allow for water infiltration and thus feed our groundwater supplies.

Learn More

A number of research-based publications, such as "Fertilizer Recommendations to Maintain and Protect Water Quality," "Managing Lawns and Gardens to Protect Water Quality" and "Wise Water Use in Landscaping," are available at your county Cooperative Extension Center or at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/ag_publications.html **Carl Matyac**

Q&A What are those little white flying insects underneath my petunia leaves?

Whiteflies are one of the most common greenhouse pests on bedding plants and other potted flowering crops. Whiteflies are in the same order as aphids, mealybugs and scale. They have sucking mouth parts and many are carriers of plant pathogens. They often are present in great numbers on the underside of leaves and may be abundant on greenhouse and houseplants. Eggs are laid on the underside of leaves and hatch in 4 to

12 days into active, six-legged crawlers. The crawlers move about for a short time, then they insert their beaks in the plant leaves and start sucking sap. After the first molt, they look like small scales. After the second molt, the insects become pupae and finally the four-winged adults leave the pupal skins. Whiteflies secrete a honeydew which supports the sooty-mold fungus. Control whiteflies with insecticidal soaps or horticultural oils. **Amy Lynn Bartel**

Peaches Punctuate Summer with Flavor

If peach season has you considering growing your own, choose varieties that require at least 750 hours of chilling or cold weather during the winter. In addition, be aware that peaches require lots of management and care. Some peach varieties recommended for North Carolina are 'Winblo', 'Contender', 'Summer Pearl', 'Encore' and 'Cresthaven'.

Peach trees, like many fruit trees, prefer deep, well-drained fertile soils with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5. They do not grow well in heavy, slow-draining soils. For more information on growing peach trees, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center.

If all the hard work isn't for you, take advantage of North Carolina's flavor-packed peaches. If you are interested in visiting one of North Carolina's many roadside peach stands, you can find most of them in the Sandhills. The peaches begin ripening around the first of June and continue through August. Check out the Sandhills Peach Report at [//montgomery.ces.state.nc.us/peach1.html](http://montgomery.ces.state.nc.us/peach1.html) for availability of certain varieties, directions and hours of many of the peach stands. For information on farmers markets or pick-your-own farms that may be closer to you, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center or visit www.agr.state.nc.us.

Amy Lynn Bartel

ENVIRO-TIP

Attract Insects That Work for You

Insects buzzing around you can be aggravating, but they may be trying to help you by making a meal of the bugs eating your vegetables or flowers. Predacious insects are rapidly becoming an accepted alternative method of controlling harmful insects. Predacious insects have always been part of our ecosystem, but only recently have entomologists learned the benefits of using predatory insects as an alternative method of controlling destructive insects. Beneficial insects control certain insects more cheaply, safely and effectively than some pesticides.

Home gardeners considering the use of parasitic insects to control destructive ones need to approach this type of gardening in a rather unconventional manner. Monitor the activities of all insects, both good and bad ones. Identification

of insects and stages is paramount. Investment in a garden insect book with color prints is the most practical method of identifying insects.

Accept the fact that using parasitic insects takes time and gardens may not always look the best. The first time beneficial insects are used may be a total failure. Don't give up! It takes a great deal of patience and luck using beneficial insects.

Use plant materials that attract beneficial insects. Here is a list to get you started: sage, wallflower, salvia, nasturtium, poppy, zinnia, dill, anise, fennel, coriander, parsley, marigold, aster, daisies, coneflower, bee balm, basil, oregano, mints, cosmos, lovage, wild mustard and canola.

Entomologists at NC State University have written several publications about biological controls that are available at your county Cooperative Extension Center. Ask for "Questions and Answers for the Home Gardener," "Purchasing Natural Enemies" and "Application of Natural Enemies." Access additional information at ipmwww.ncsu.edu/ornamentals/biocon.html and www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/.

Darrell Blackwelder



Purple Sage

gardentalk

"It was one of those perfect summer days – the sun was shining, a breeze was blowing, the birds were singing, and the lawnmower was broken."

– James Dent





Gardening in June and July

Lawns

- Water your lawn when it shows signs of moisture stress: bluish-gray color, footprints that remain in the lawn after walking on it and wilted, folded or curled leaves.
- Cut grass at the proper height: common Bermuda grass at 2 inches, hybrid Bermuda grass at 1 to 1 1/2 inches, centipede at 1 1/2 to 2 inches, zoysia at 1 to 2 inches and turf-type tall fescue at 3 to 3 1/2 inches.
- Watch for the development of brown patch disease on your cool-season grasses. Do not fertilize cool-season grasses during the summer.

Ornamentals

- Be extremely careful when mowing or using a power trimmer around trees; do not damage the bark.
 - Soak newly planted trees once a week.
 - Treat crabapples, crape myrtles and other plants susceptible to Japanese beetles with liquid Sevin.
 - Make sure you apply water effectively and efficiently. Generally, one inch per week will give soil the proper amount of moisture.
 - Check plants regularly for damaging insects and diseases.
 - Continue planting summer-flowering bulbs such as gladiolus and dahlias.
- ### Edibles
- Allow strawberry runners to develop into new daughter plants. This will increase next year's harvest.
 - Cover fig bushes with a net to keep birds from ruining the fruit.
 - Keep fruit trees sprayed with a home orchard spray to control diseases.
 - Train and support tomatoes.
 - Watch for blossom-end rot on tomatoes. Apply a calcium chloride solution.

Karen Neill

Garden Spot

Elizabeth Lawrence's Southern Garden in Charlotte is now the garden of Extension's Master Gardener™ Lindie Wilson, who happily shares the noted garden writer's creation with others.

Elizabeth Lawrence, NC State University landscape architect graduate, garden writer and author of many books, including *A Southern Garden*, moved to Charlotte in 1948. With her profound understanding of gardening, she became an authority on Southern gardening. Wilson, an avid gardener herself, purchased Lawrence's house in 1986, one year after Lawrence's death. Wilson has maintained 60 to 70 percent of Lawrence's plants along with the symmetrical grid of the garden and the pathways that enclose a circular pond. She has added containers of color throughout the garden. Though the garden is not officially open to the public except for invited groups, it will be open on Sept. 14 and 15 during the Garden Conservancy's Open Days Program. See page 2.

Emily Revels

Almanac Gardener

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