

Common Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)

The Common Crape Myrtle is a deciduous, small to medium sized shrub or small tree with a variable, moderately dense habit, often multi-stemmed form. It can grow to 15-20 feet tall.

The showy pink flowers of the Crape Myrtle have wrinkled petals like crepe paper. It is sometimes known as the “lilac of the south”. The foliage is dark green changing in fall to yellows, oranges, and reds. The thin gray bark is exfoliating, exposing a smooth, vari-colored under bark ranging from brown to gray. It needs plenty of moisture when young. After it is established it will tolerate drought and grow well in limited soil spaces. During the growing season, new growth can be pinched to increase flower number and branchiness. The branches will droop as the tree grows. The lower branches are often thinned to show off the trunk form and color.

Locally, this plant is grown multi-stemmed and is managed as a shrub. Single stem specimens are available, and farther to our south these single stemmed plants are managed as small to medium trees. We do not use the Crape Myrtle in our urban forest here in New Albany.