

Lagerstroemia species

Lagerstroemia archerii

Lagerstroemia indica

Lagerstroemia speciosa

Originating in Asia and named after the crinkled material which the fluted to crinkled petals resemble the deciduous crepe myrtle is one of the longest blooming of all trees with flowering periods ranging from 2 to four months. Now extensively hybridised and they can be seen in sizes from dwarf to full sized trees of up to 15m.

Leaves are alternate and smooth with size depending on the species or cultivar. They are Summer flowering, species crepes (note that these are not to be confused with the hybrids which have a far greater range of size and flower colour but will not grow true to form from seed and will usually revert back to a parent plant) produce profuse showy clusters of blooms in white, pink and purplish/red.

Fruits are brown or black and dry and split releasing quite copious seed. As they can be quite expert at self-seeding you may need to take care with seed and seedlings or they can tend to create a weedy problem both in your garden and nearby. Remember they are exotics and can compete very strongly with desirable native species.

The large varieties are quick growing, sometimes up to a metre in a growing season, particularly in areas with good rainfall. The tendency is to prune crepes heavily but in fact this can often cause suckering and lose the distinct trunks and graceful form that is a feature of a well cared for crape. One of their attractions is the flaking bark that exposes a highly attractive inner bark in a hue from nutmeg to grey, a feature highlighted by maintaining a good clean trunk. Prune only to control density and the line of the branches. Often, they are best left entirely to their own resources, although by removing the old flower heads you can often promote another round of flowering. Crepe Myrtle is best grown in full sun in moist well-drained soil but it will tolerate dry conditions once established. It is frost hardy in Australian conditions. It has a range of uses from general screening, hedging, as a grouped feature or as a single stunning Summer flowering feature.

Propagation

Crepe Myrtle is easily propagated from seed without the need for pretreatment.

Sow seed on the surface of any good quality seed raising mix and cover lightly. Maintain the media in a moist but not damp condition.

Prick small seedlings out into individual tubes as soon as they are large enough to handle. Grow on as desired. Plant out in their intended position after the danger of frost has passed. Protect young seedlings from slugs and snails.



GREEN AND FRESH SEEDS

