

# **Crapemyrtle pruning**

*By Mark Livingston, ISA Board Certified Master*

*Arborist Arboguard Tree Specialists*

*February 2022*

As a professional arborist, I frequently get asked “how should a Crapemyrtle be pruned?”. There is a lot of misinformation and improper methods that are perpetuated about Crapemyrtle pruning.

Everyone is familiar with ‘crape murder’ and has seen or know someone who has severely topped a crape myrtle. Severely topping a Crapemyrtle is not proper pruning. Many believe ‘topping’ is required to promote flowering, some prune because the plant is too large for a desired space, and some do it just because they see their neighbors doing it and feel that they need to do it as well. Typically, only light pruning is needed, if any.

Choosing the right cultivar for the right location will eliminate the need for size maintenance pruning. Crapemyrtles come in dwarf as well as small, medium, and large tree selections. When given an ideal location these tree types should be allowed to develop their natural style without chopping off their tops.

If you have a large Crapemyrtle that is too large for its location consider all options before immediately settling on top pruning. Always prune based on objectives. If limbs are conflicting with people or cars, remove branches to create clearance. If limbs are blocking windows or doors, remove the branch or branch parts to open adequate access to these areas. If a tree is too close to the building, remove limbs that grow toward the building or remove any major leads that are closest to the building to create space. Only as a last resort should a beautiful, old specimen be top pruned to squeeze into a confined space.

To keep Crapemyrtles at a manageable height, they should be pruned annually. The pruning should only remove the necessary amount of height needed for you to manage them. The pruning cuts should be no bigger than the size of a pencil. Cuts made larger than a pencil means you have removed too much height and also created a substantial sized wound that could be infected with pathogens before the cut can close completely.

Crapemyrtles produce flowers on new growth. They will produce larger flowers and bloom more profusely if lightly pruned but they will also produce plenty of flowers without pruning, which is less stress overall for the plant.

If Crapemyrtles are properly pruned and cared for they will look better and have fewer issues with insects and diseases. Less is better when it comes to Crapemyrtle pruning and should save you money in the process. Always consult with and use an ISA certified arborist to care for and prune your Crapemyrtles.



**Before and after photos of crapemyrtle pruning. To keep Crapemyrtles at a manageable height, they should be pruned annually. Less is better when it comes to Crapemyrtle pruning.**