TEXAS A&M Issue 5 | March 2019

EXTENSION

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PLANT OF THE

MONTH: CRAPE MYRTLE

Crape Myrtle is one of the most common, toughest, and showiest plants on the South Plains. Crape Myrtles come in many varieties, colors, and sizes making them an excellent choice for nearly everyone! Unfortunately, there has been this horrible "ritual" of butchering them every year put into practice.

Topping Crape Myrtles causes <u>permanent</u> scars and makes a profusion of smaller branches resulting in a lack of proportion. All trees have a characteristic shape. It just so happens that crapemyrtles have one of the most beautiful. *Continued on Page 5*



Starting Seeds Febraury 9, 2019

South Plains horticalture





SLATON COMMUNITY GARDEN SERIES

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Lubbock County Horticulture in conjunction with Slaton ISD began an every-second-Saturday community garden series at Slaton Junior High School that instructs attendees through an entire year in the garden. The purpose of the series is to provide classroom style and hands on learning on starting (design and construction), maintaining and harvesting (nutritional information included) a garden to provide fresh produce for the entire community through the *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities* program. All Slaton community members are invited to participate! For more information, contact Christina Reid, CEA at 806-775-1740 or christina.reid@ag.tamu.edu.





PART III: LANDSCAPE GOALS

Before you begin to plan the landscape or planting, clearly identify your goals. How do you plan to use the space? Make a list of the activities you intend to carry out in the yard or garden. This may include relaxing, sunbathing, pets or recreation. Do you wish to have an outdoor dining area? Do you need to plan areas for pets, hobbies or for children to play? Be thorough and consider all members of the household. List the number of people that participate in each activity; this will help you to plan an appropriately sized area for each activity.

Identify any structures or hardscape that you may need to install to meet the desired landscape uses such as a patio or deck to accommodate a dining area. Will you include a play structure or fenced area? Make sure to consider long-term plans as well as immediate ones. Perhaps you plan to put in a swimming pool or hot tub one day. These should be included in your initial planning.

Determine what special features, if any, you might want to add to the landscape. Perhaps you want to include a fountain, sculpture or outdoor lighting features in the garden. Are there specialty gardens you wish to install such as a cutting or vegetable garden, or wildlife habitat? Identify structures that might help you enjoy the landscape to its fullest. These may include pergolas for shade, benches and sitting areas, paths or steps. Each should be considered as part of the planning process.

Make sure to get the entire family involved in the planning stage so that everyone's needs are addressed. You might find family members have very different ideas or needs, work to meet as many as possible. Get the ideas down on paper; you can decide later which ones will realistically fit into your landscape plan.

Create a Rough Plan

Once you have identified your wants and needs in the landscape, it is time to start putting ideas on paper. It is a good idea to make **several copies** of your landscape drawing to use for planning, and **work in pencil**. You will likely go through several drafts before coming up with a plan you like.

The landscape drawing already indicates the locations of existing structures, trees and other plantings. Remove from your drawing any plants or structures you plan on removing or replacing in the landscape. Now draw bubbles to represent the different use areas you intend to incorporate into the landscape and label each bubble clearly with its intended use. Bubble drawings help define use areas and allow you to visualize how different use areas fit together into the landscape.

The bubbles roughly correspond to the shape and size of planned use areas but will continue to be refined throughout the design process (Figure 1).

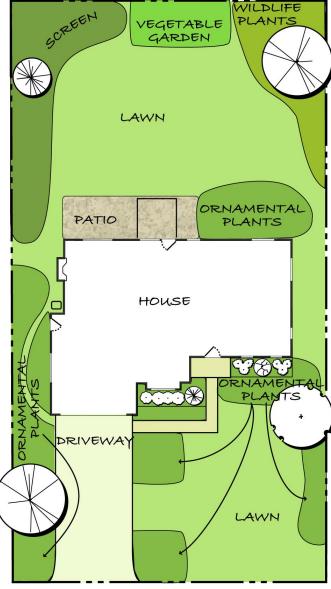
Remember to include service areas where garbage cans may be stored, a location for stacking firewood if you have a fireplace and an area for composting. Patios, walkways and sheds can be drawn to approximate the intended shape and size. Be sure to include all planned use areas and proposed structures.

Create several potential bubble drawings and select the best one. The final selection will be used to develop a more detailed concept plan. In a concept plan, the individual bubbles begin to take on specific shapes and characteristics. We also start to see where one bubble borders another, and how individual spaces will come together. The concept plan provides a starting point for designing the landscape but is far from a completed design.

One final consideration in the planning phase is irrigation. Consider how you intend to water the landscape plantings. Will you install an irrigation system to water lawns or garden beds? Are there adequate faucets to accommodate watering by hand or sprinkler? Planning can save you time, labor and expense in the long term. You may need to work with a contractor to create an irrigation plan. Once you have developed an irrigation plan, add this to your concept plan as well.

It is important to also note, if you do not feel confident with design, you can hire a landscape architect or designer to complete all or part the design work. Take the time to find a designer you feel comfortable working with. Some businesses offer design work only, while others design, install and may even maintain landscapes. When selecting a firm, review photographs of past projects and ask for references. Visit some of the designer's completed projects to see the finished work. A good designer will listen to your ideas and use them to create a space that meets your needs.

Figure 1.
Bubble
drawing with
areas
identified for
vegetable
gardening,
lawn, wildlife
habitat and
mixed beds.



Illustrations Courtesy of Oklahoma Coopertaive Extension

Nature's Core Kids Expo

Thursday, March 14 10:00-3:00

Science Spectrum 2579 S Loop 289 #250 Lubbock

The City of Lubbock Water Education Team and the Science Spectrum are hosting this free to the public event to educate children and adults about the environment and becoming good stewards of the earth. The Lubbock Master Gardeners will have an activity booth and seed crafts!



Growing Grapes in West Texas

SATURDAY, MARCH 16 9:00-11:00

Texas AgriLife Extension and Research Center

1105 E FM 1294 Lubbock

Learn how to grow grapes with Extension Specialist Dr. Pierre Helwi. This free course will cover variety selection, terroir, establishing a vineyard, and phenology stages.



Best Vegetable Varieties for Lubbock

SATURDAY, MARCH 23 10:00-11:00

Lubbock Garden & Arts Center

4215 University Lubbock

Come learn what the best vegetable varities are for Lubbock with certified Lubbock Master Gardener Dennis Howard. \$10 fee





Spring in Lubbock



ASK AN AGENT...

Q: What can I do to protect my plants from this polar vortex cold?

A: The night before the cold air arrives: Bring potted annul plants into an unheated garage. Tropicals plants should be brought indoors. All other plants should be deeply watered, taking caution to keep water off leaves and stems. Unscrew and drain all hoses. Unless you have a rain/freeze sensor, turn your irrigation system to off. You can take extra precation by placing a cloth, as opposed to plastic, sheet or blanket on top of plants. Have a question you would like to see answered in a future issue? Email christina.reid@ag.tamu.edu today!

CRAPE MYRTLES CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Topping does create larger blooms, though fewer of them. Unfortunately, these larger blooms on new young shoots tend to flop over and droop after summer rains or break in high winds.

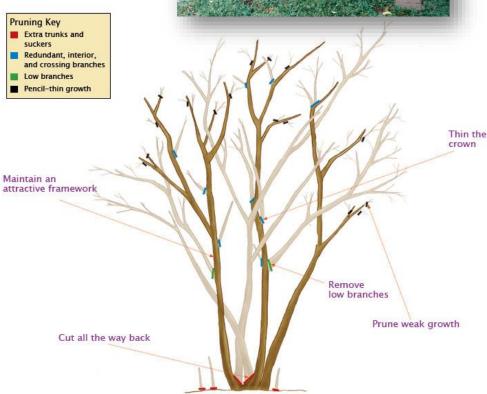
The only real pruning crape myrtles require is to thin out the trunks on young trees leaving somewhere around 3 to 7 permanents trunks/canes. Odd numbers are always best. The fewer you have, the more you can admire their shape and smooth texture. Each year around early spring, all you do is remove any new suckers that appear from the ground. Make sure to cut suckers back all the way to the soil line. Removing dried pods during the winter doesn't promote any more bloom during the summer. Removing them during the summer does promote faster re-bloom, however. This "old saying" of pruning back to pencil size wood comes from recommendations from the 1960's and is antiquated.

Occasional pruning to remove weakened, broken or low branches can also be needed.



https://www.facebook.com/LbkHorticulture/





 $Courtesy\ of\ Aggie\ Horticulture\ \underline{https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/stopthecrape.html}\ and\ Greg\ Grant Horticulture\ \underline{https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/par$



For more information on any of the topics, or to ask questions please contact:

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