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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 permanent 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*

South Plains *horticulture*



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.



Starting Seeds February 9, 2019

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).

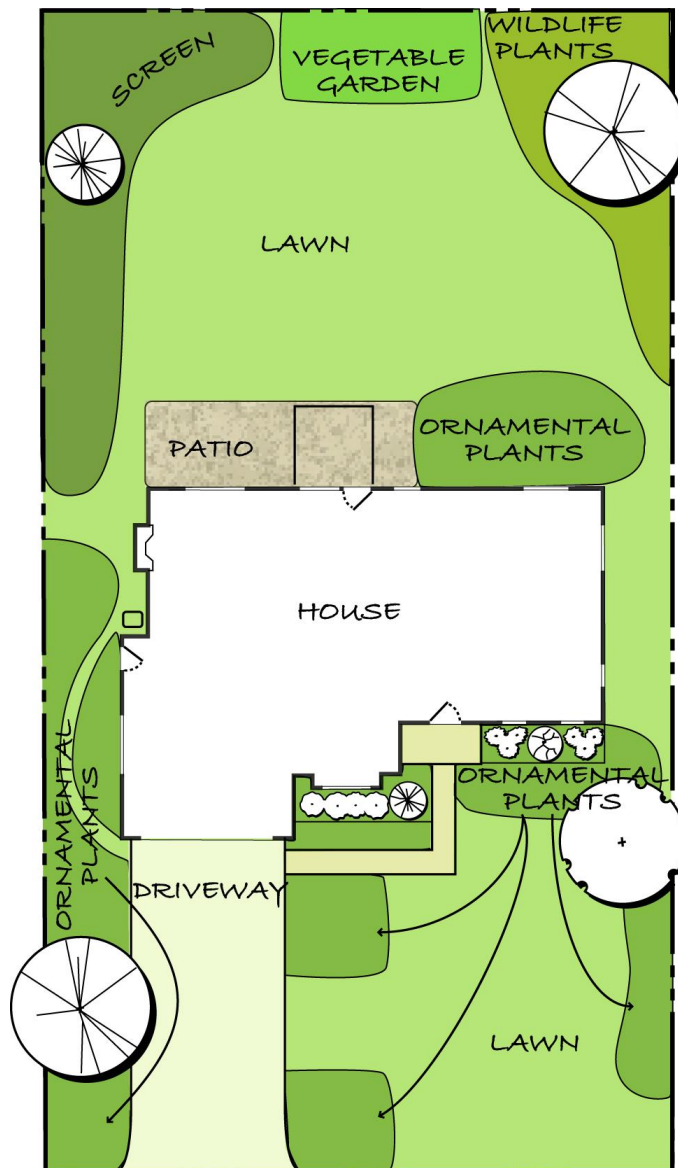
Remember to include service areas where garbage cans may be stored, a location for stacking firewood if you have a fireplace and an area for composting. Patios, walkways and sheds can be drawn to approximate the intended shape and size. Be sure to include all planned use areas and proposed structures.

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 Cooperative Extension



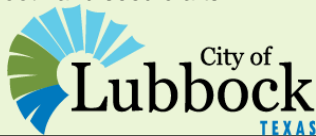
UPCOMING EVENTS

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.



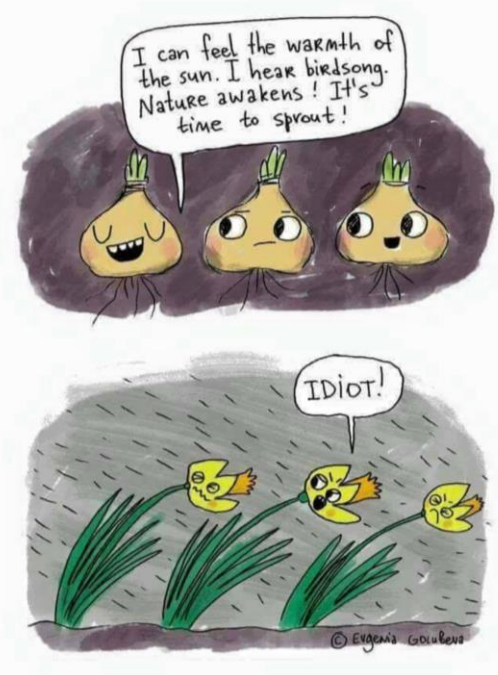
Best Vegetable Varieties for Lubbock

SATURDAY, MARCH 23 10:00-11:00

Lubbock Garden & Arts Center

4215 University Lubbock

Come learn what the best vegetable varieties 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 annual 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 precaution 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!*

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.

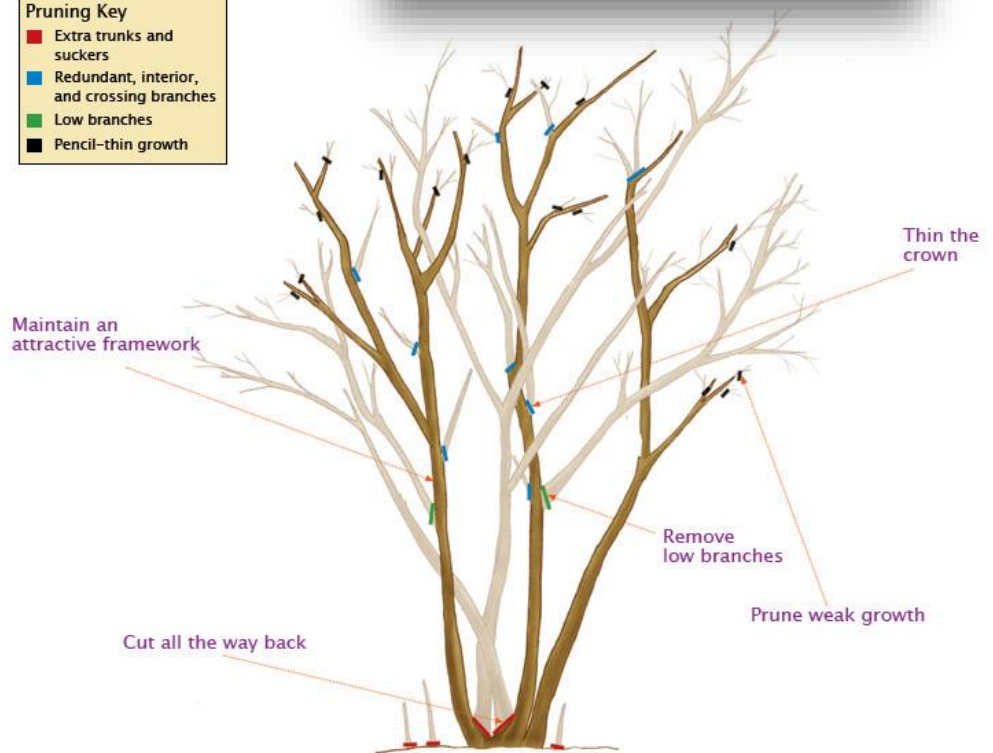
The only real pruning crape myrtles require is to thin out the trunks on young trees leaving somewhere around 3 to 7 permanent trunks/canes. Odd numbers are always best. The fewer you have, the more you can admire their shape and smooth texture. Each year around early spring, all you do is remove any 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.



Pruning Key

- Extra trunks and suckers
- Redundant, interior, and crossing branches
- Low branches
- Pencil-thin growth



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



Courtesy of Aggie Horticulture <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/stopthecrape.html> and Greg Grant



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

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