



## *Lagerstroemia speciosa* Queens Crape-Myrtle<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This is one of only a few deciduous trees which grow in tropical and subtropical areas of the country (Fig. 1). A profusion of large, three-inch wide, bright pink to lavender blooms appear in dense, foot-long, terminal panicles from June to July, making Queen's Crape-Myrtle a spectacular specimen or street tree. This large, upright rounded, deciduous tree is clothed with 12-inch-long, dark green, oblong, leathery leaves which turn attractively red before falling in winter. Queen's Crape-Myrtle can reach 40 to 60 feet in height and a spread of 30 to 40 feet. The attractive bark is smooth, mottled and peeling. In India, the wood is used for railroad ties and construction. The bark is thin and easily injured.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Lagerstroemia speciosa*

**Pronunciation:** lay-ger-STREE-mee-uh  
spee-see-OH-suh

**Common name(s):** Queens Crape-Myrtle

**Family:** *Lythraceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; shade tree; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage,

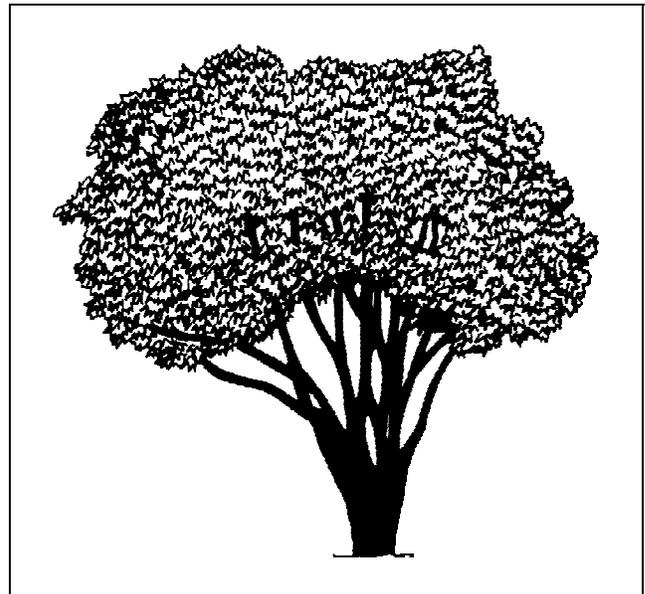


Figure 1. Mature Queens Crape-Myrtle.

compacted soil, and/or drought are common

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 40 to 60 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 40 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round; upright; vase shape

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** semievergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** red

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** lavender; pink

**Flower characteristics:** summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval; round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

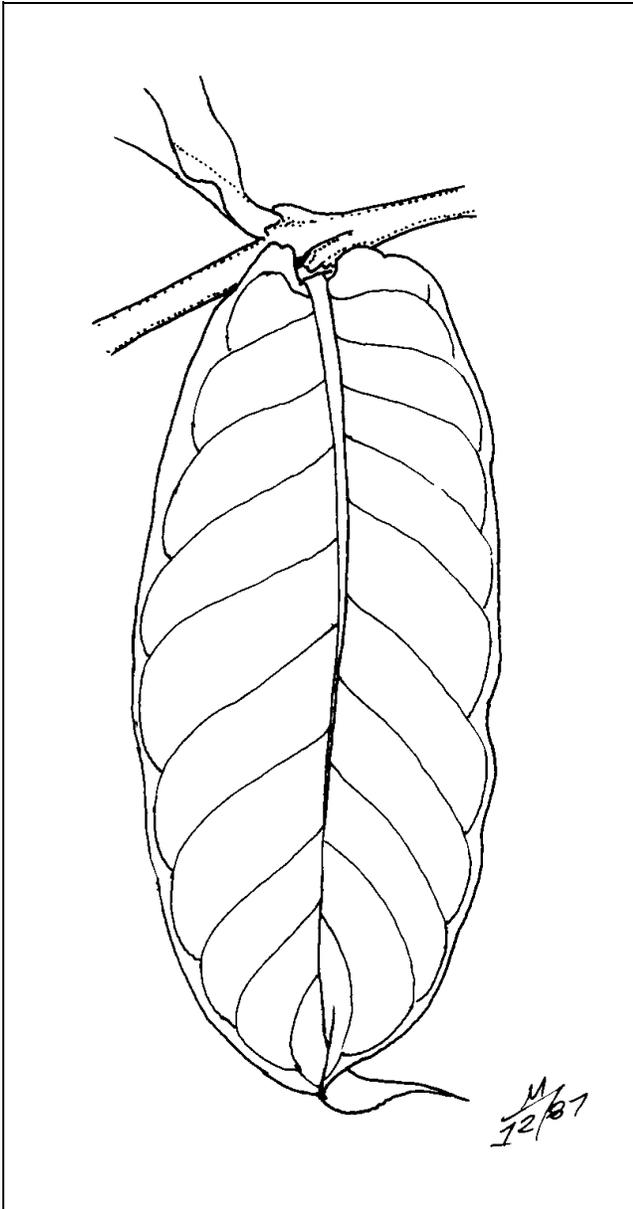


Figure 3. Foliage of Queens Crape-Myrtle.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

Queen's Crape-Myrtle will grow in full sun on a wide range of well-drained soils but is not salt-tolerant. Where there are no overhead restrictions, this makes a nice large street tree due to the upright-spreading habit of growth. This reduces the regular pruning needed to remove lower drooping branches on some other trees. However, when the trees are young, some lower branches will need to be removed for street tree planting to create clearance for passage of pedestrians and vehicles. The tree should tolerate storms well having hard wood with flexible branches, as long as they are well spaced along the trunk and not clumped together growing from one point on the trunk. Plants should be watered faithfully and protected from frost. Not a tree to plant and forget, Queen's Crape-Myrtle appreciates regular fertilization or leaves become chlorotic. It will tolerate alkaline soil.

Propagation is by cuttings, division of root suckers, or by seed which germinate readily. Plants will flower the second year from seed. There are other species of tropical *Lagerstroemia*, some available in selected nurseries.

### Pests

Aphids and scale, followed by sooty mold.

### Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.