

Please Prune Correctly!

Every year about this time, it gets so disgusting to see the outrageous damage that some homeowners or landscapers do to crape myrtles. It is usually mid-winter when we start to see these acts occur. I always start to get calls from homeowners when they drive up to their local shopping centers and see crape myrtles with their limbs being cut back by 2/3. This act is known in the industry as 'crape murder.' You can Google regarding this term and get a great opinion on what the tree industry professionals think of this practice as well as proper pruning techniques.

Many homeowners then ask if it is wrong, why do they still do it? There are several thoughts on this. One is that they have never been trained to prune correctly. Secondly, once a plant has been pruned this way, it is often scarred for life, so many go back to the same spot and they remove the same amount. The other question is, "Is it the proper time of year?" The answer technically is NO. Proper pruning time for these plants is late February or best into early March. One should wait for the worst of winter to pass so that extreme cold does not have a chance to get down into the tree and injure it permanently.

So now back to the question of why they continue to do it this time of year? The answer is simple; most landscapers have extra time and personnel during the winter months and try to take advantage of this by getting maintenance items done. Again, I encourage you to go to any of these sites or contact your local extension services on good, proper guides for pruning crape myrtles.

Enjoy the garden!

Mark