

Stop the Crape Murder!

By: Melinda Sperl

Crape Murder is in progress again! Seeing this again begs me to repeat this article hoping to stop one more Crape Myrtle from being ruined.



Crape Murder is when Crape Myrtles are trimmed to stubs with gnarly looking ends.

Why does this happen? The only thing I can assume is that people don't know the difference so it is our job to educate them.

I am constantly being asked why a Crape is not blooming or why it is covered with disease. If you stop cutting the plant in the same place every year and blocking the vascular system it might actually be healthy. Those ugly "bulges" that form on the tree are actual scar tissue and will eventually block nutrients from getting to branch ends. That is where the flowers form. No nutrients, no blooms.

Unhealthy plants attract insects. The insects' excrement forms black sooty mold. Crapes trimmed in this fashion are a prime breeding ground for insects.



How should these colorful plants be trimmed? Crape Myrtles are actually a large shrub grown as a tree. Each year it can be trimmed by cutting off the dead flower tips, cutting any inside or cross growing branches plus trimming any unsightly branches to lightly shape it. Exactly the same as you cut any tree. If height is a problem, you can cut the branch lengths but not in the same place each year. Severely cutting a branch each year in the exact same place creates knob-like formations on the branches that are unnatural and unhealthy and will shorten the tree's life.

If your tree is already damaged, each year trim off one or two of the damaged branches and eventually the tree will recover. However, it is not advisable to cut off all damaged branches at one time as you may lose the entire tree.

It is amazing but nature really does know how to grow plants without help and Crapes do not have to be trimmed to bloom.

Please, stop the Crape Murder.

Happy Gardening!

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