



# FNGA's Florida Plants of the Year (Part 2)

**Editor's Note:** In the last issue we told you about the program started by the Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association that will identify superior plant material that performs well but is often underutilized. If you are looking for proven plant material to provide color and diversity on your course, you may want to give these 1998 Florida Plants of the Year a closer look.

The program's selection committee includes horticulturists, nurserymen, educators, architects and other professional members of the horticulture industry from central, north and south Florida. Here are the rest of the selections for 1998.

## Trees

### ACOMA CRAPE MYRTLE

*Lagerstroemia indica* (crape myrtle) is commonly referred to as the "Lilac of the South." Over 75 cultivars are currently being evaluated in north



Florida. Of these, the *Florida Plants of the Year* selection committee has chosen three. One of the winners selected was 'Acoma.' This plant will reach a mature size of about 12' x 12'.

An outstanding characteristic of the white flowering 'Acoma' is its very distinctive horizontal habit of growth. The tree usually begins blooming around late June and continues for about three months.

The bark color is in attractive shades of cream and beige. As fall approaches, look for striking foliage color that gives way to fine branching structure. This interesting structure lends itself to a nice display with night lighting in the winter. Acoma is a National Arboretum hybrid and has excellent powdery mildew resistance.

Crape myrtles are adaptable to climatic conditions throughout Florida. Planting

in full sun will result in the best flower production. They are tolerant of a wide range of soil types, but grow poorly in wet soils.

**Common Name:** Acoma crape myrtle

**Horticultural Name:** *Lagerstroemia indica* 'Acoma'

**Hardiness:** Zone 7

**Mature Height x Spread:** 12' x 12'

**Classification:** Small tree

**Landscape Use:** Patio tree, focal point

**Characteristics:** Distinctive horizontal growth habit with white pendulous flowers

### TONTO CRAPE MYRTLE

*Lagerstroemia indica* (crape myrtle) was introduced to the southern United States over 150 years ago from Asia. Since that time, many new hybrids have been developed. Among these introductions



was an *indica* x *fauriei* named 'Tonto.'

'Tonto' is an upright, rounded plant reaching about 15' in height. It produces the best red flowers of any of the disease-resistant

hybrids. The red panicle may be up to eight inches in diameter. Bloom usually begins in July and extends through September. Its bright maroon colored fall leaves drop in winter, revealing a living sculpture. This USDA release exhibits good powdery mildew resistance.

With very few pest problems and low fertility requirements, crape myrtles make an excellent choice for the landscape. They also require very little pruning. Prune to develop shape or remove suckers, but avoid hard pruning on an annual or regular basis. Tip pruning to remove old flowers will promote repeat blooming.

Crape myrtles tolerate a wide range of soil types, but perform poorly in wet soils. Best flowering and disease resistance is achieved by planting them in full sun.

**Common Name:** Tonto crape myrtle

**Horticultural Name:** *Lagerstroemia indica* 'Tonto'

**Hardiness:** Zone 7

**Mature Height x Spread:** 15' x 15'

**Characteristics:** Upright, rounded plant reaching 15' in height

### SIoux CRAPE MYRTLE

Crape myrtle derives its common name from its crepe-like crinkled petals and the resemblance of its leaves to the true myrtle, *Myrtus communis*.



Among over 75 cultivars being tested in Florida, the National Arboretum hybrid 'Sioux' was selected because of several outstanding characteristics.

This tight, vase-shaped cultivar reaches about 20' in height and develops blooms that are a beautiful shade of medium pink. The bloom usually lasts from July through September. Because of its almost columnar habit, the Sioux is an excellent choice for narrow spaces. A 9 year-old Sioux crape myrtle at the University of Florida's Research and Education Center in Monticello is 20' tall and only 11' wide. Fall foliage color is an intense red. The plant shows an excellent resistance to powdery mildew.

Crape myrtles are seen throughout Florida today and offer a tremendous display in the summer. When looking for that medium-size tree to highlight the landscape, consider 'Sioux.'

Crape myrtles are very tolerant of drought and a wide range of soil types. They perform poorly in wet soil conditions.

**Common Name:** Sioux crape myrtle

**Horticultural Name:** *Lagerstroemia indica* 'Sioux'

**Hardiness:** Zone 7

**Mature Height:** 20'

**Landscape use:** Narrow spaces, landscape highlight

**Characteristics:** Tight, vase-shaped cultivar that reaches 20' in height and develops medium pink blooms

*Plant descriptions and photos provided by the Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association, 1533 Park center Dr., Orlando, FL 32835, 407-295-7994, Fax 407-295-1619, e-mail: fnga@aol.com*