



## **Time Is Upon Us Again To Prune Crape Myrtles**

By James Morgan, Dougherty County Extension Agent

As I drove around the city and county for the past two months, I started looking to see who were pruning their crape myrtles. This practice of pruning starting in late October or early November seems to be a common practice here in the south. I have asked several people how did this practice came to be and why. Would you know I have gotten reasons all across the spectrum from “I don’t know” to “I think it started in the early 80”s. Well, trying to relay the proper pruning techniques and timing has been a bit of a challenge for me. However, I have noticed that there are places where crape myrtles are left alone, slightly pruned or topped. I have even received calls over the years letting me know the crape myrtles were not hacked back this year. I am truly thankful that a type of change was brought about based on unbiased researched information for UGA Cooperative Extension. On the other hand, I still see “crape murder” appearing not only in this area but most parts of the state.



If you have not yet butchered your Crape Myrtles, please prune based on the information in this article. Consider the reasons for pruning a Crape Myrtle. You can prune to shape or size the tree, to remove undesirable limbs damaged by insects and disease problems, or to clear limbs from windows or a fence. Whatever the reason may be, all these things can be accomplished without severe pruning.

While severe pruning may not kill or injure a healthy crepe myrtle tree, it is not as aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Yes, the smooth multicolor bark is a welcome attraction to the winter landscape. However, with proper pruning and/or plant selection, you can enjoy beautiful Crape Myrtles in the landscape all year long.

One way to avoid severe pruning is to plant dwarf (less than 3 ft.), or semi-dwarf (3 to 6 ft.) Crape Myrtle cultivars. If you desire a tree shape, select tall (12 ft. and over) cultivars, since this is the desirable feature, or prune out all except one to five branches at ground level. You should remove all side branches up to the level where you want the limbs to start. If you desire a medium size shrub, remove all twiggy growth that is smaller than the size of a pencil thus stimulating healthy growth in the spring.

Yearly pruning of your Crape Myrtles in late winter (mid-February) or early spring before the new growth begins depends largely on the size and shape of the shrub you want, and it will increase flower production. However, eliminating the top of the tree to the point where it looks like a stick growing out of the ground is not necessary! For more information on pruning Crape Myrtles or a site visit, please contact me at the Dougherty County Extension office or email me at [morganjl@uga.edu](mailto:morganjl@uga.edu).

Crape Myrtle Culture <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubs/PDF/L331.pdf>

# WINTER DISEASES

By Sharon Dowdy, UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



To help keep diseases out of your winter annual flowerbeds, University of Georgia plant pathologist Jean Williams-Woodward recommends starting with disease-resistant plants. "Selecting powdery mildew resistant cultivars of crape myrtles is easy. Just buy the ones with the Indian names," said Williams-Woodward, a scientist with the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. These include the white flowering, 'Natchez' and the lavender flowering 'Muskogee.' Selecting disease resistant flowering annuals takes a little more thought.

When adding pansies to your winter landscape, she recommends selecting from this list of leaf spot resistant varieties: 'Bingo Red & Yellow,' 'Crown Blue,' 'Crown Golden,' 'Crystal Bowl Supreme Yellow,' 'Crystal Bowl True Blue,' 'Dynamite Red & Yellow,' 'Majestic Giants Yellow' and 'Viola Sorbet Blackberry Cream.' "Leaf spot resistance doesn't mean they are totally immune to disease," she said; "it means they get less disease than a susceptible variety. "If Patiola pansies are your flower of choice, Williams-Woodard recommends buying Purple Passion Mix, Pure Yellow, Pure Lemon and Pure Orange. These varieties are all less susceptible to Cercospora leaf spot than the Colossus series cultivars, she said.

This season Williams-Woodward expects to see snapdragons and pansies with downy mildew. This disease likes wet, humid and cooler weather. "The best control method is to remove the downy mildew infected plants because it spreads very fast," she said. "You can send the plants to me because I personally love mildews. Once it spreads in your flowerbed, you won't be able to control it."

Impatiens, another Georgia landscape favorite, is often infected by downy mildew. Williams-Woodward says home landscapers who saw the disease on their impatiens last year, will see it again if they plant in the same spot. "It can be hard to spot the symptoms - rapid defoliation, subtle leaf discoloration, downward cupping of leaves and white sporulation on the leaf underside - but eventually your impatiens will look like bare stems or twigs," she said.

Root rot disease is also a major problem in winter landscape beds. Georgia has had a fairly wet winter, which will make conditions ideal for root rot disease. "If you buy cheap plants from the 'almost dead rack' you are buying and bringing home problems," Williams-Woodward said. To help prevent root rot diseases, she recommends installing plants at a higher elevation, not planting too deeply, improving soil drainage and redirecting water so plants are not overwatered. "And try not to till in old plants and plant materials," she said. "If you had disease there before you are just incorporating that material back into the area." Root rot diseases thrive in moisture, so inspect plant beds and make sure there are no sources of extra water, such as a downspout aimed into the bed or an irrigation pattern that directly hits the area.

Numerous cases of black root rot (*Thielaviopsis basicola*) are being reported. It produces black spores in chains that survive in soil. In large numbers they cause the roots to look black, thus the name. "We are seeing a lot of it this year but some years we don't. It favors cooler temperatures and alkaline soils, so keeping the pH below 5.8 will reduce it," she said. Avoiding susceptible plants will also help fight black root rot. Susceptible plants include vincas, pansies/violas, snapdragons, impatiens, petunias, calibrachos, verbenas and begonias. Less susceptible plants are salvias, geraniums, marigolds, zinnias, dusty millers, coleuses and celosias. "I haven't met a calibrachoa yet that isn't susceptible to black root rot," she said.

Overall, to help reduce the amount of disease growing in your landscape flowerbeds, Williams-Woodward recommends following these tips:

- ~Propagate from clean stock.
- ~Manage and modify the environment.
- ~Eliminate disease-prone plants.
- ~Follow good sanitation practices.
- ~Plant the correct plant in the correct location.
- ~Use resistant cultivars.
- ~Use, but don't rely on, chemical control.
- ~ Keep your tools clean.

"Keeping track of what diseases you have in your beds now will help you plan for your landscape in the future," she said.

# Add New Plants Now, So They Will Survive Later

By Michael J. Wheeler UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Fall and winter are the best times for Georgians to add new trees, shrubs and bushes to their landscapes.

Balled and burlapped trees and bushes do best if they are planted in the fall or winter, and bare root plants should only be planted in the dead of winter. Fall and winter are the most ideal times to install a new plant because the cold gives the plant more time to develop strong roots before the heat of summer tests their survival.

The key to a plant's survival is the gardener's prep-work. The first year of a plant's growth should concentrate on root establishment. If the root system is not allowed to develop in the new environment, the plant may die. The more you help the plant now, the less you should have to do later.

Much of the prep-work comes from making sure you put the plant in an environment where it can thrive. Follow the motto, "Put the right plant in the right spot." You cannot just throw the plant in a hole and walk away. There are certain things you can do to insure happy plants in your landscape.

The hole the plant grows in dictates a lot of its success. Dig a planting hole that is two to three times the diameter of the root ball. The loose dirt that surrounds the plant will encourage it to extend its roots.

While digging the hole, keep in mind the depth does not need to be deeper than the depth of the container or root ball. The top of the root ball should be level with the ground. Even though roots are in the ground, they still need to breathe.

Make sure there is a firm base at the bottom of the hole so the root system does not slip deeper into the ground. Water the tree well to make sure all the dirt has settled around the root system.

You may want to add tree supports if you are planting a larger tree and you think it might lean. These supports should be used only during the time it takes the tree to become established. This typically means for only a few months or through the summer.

Adding a layer of mulch around the tree is a must. Mulch should be 3-4 inches deep. Only about an inch of mulch should be placed against the trunk. Excessive mulch against a tree encourages insect and disease problems.

Mulch all the way out to the edge of the planting hole. This keeps weeds from sprouting in all that freshly exposed dirt and insulates the roots from extreme temperatures. Mulch will also make watering more efficient by keeping the water from evaporating from the soil. Mulch helps guard the tree or shrub from lawn mowers or weed-whackers, too. Many trees and shrubs meet their doom from "lawn mower blight."

During the first year, fertilization is not required, but make sure the plant gets about an inch to 1.5 inches of water, once or twice a week. If you are using a soaker hose, water until the top 8-10 inches of soil is good and wet. This will make the roots take hold deep in the soil.



*New plant materials can be added to Georgia landscapes all year round. Plants added in the fall and winter have a better chance to establish roots before the summer heat beats down. Image credit: Rebekah D. Wallace, .*



# Pruning and Training New Fruit Trees

Source(s): Lynwood Blackmon & Ellen Bauske

Pruning and training are important practices for managing fruit trees. The primary objective of pruning and training is to develop a strong tree framework that will support fruit production. All fruit trees are not pruned and/or trained in the same fashion. This publication is designed to get a new tree started correctly and will cover pruning and training in the first year only. It is not comprehensive. Visit UGA Cooperative Extension's web site (<http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/subjectList.cfm>) and find the publication on your specific tree. For example, search home garden figs, apples, blueberries etc. These publications contain up-to-date, research-based information.

The proper time to prune is during late winter and early spring before new growth occurs. During this time, pruning wounds heal quickly, flower buds and undesirable branches are easily recognized, bark is less likely to tear when cuts are made, and injury from low winter temperatures is avoided. Light summer pruning may also be used to train young trees to the desired shape, improve light quality, thin fruit loads or remove water sprouts and other undesirable growth.

**Apple, Pear, Plum and Apricot:** These trees are pruned and trained to a central leader. A central leader tree is characterized by one main, upright trunk, referred to as the leader. Branching generally begins on the leader 24 to 36 inches above the soil surface to allow movement under the tree.

**Figs:** Begin training to bush form at the time of planting by cutting off one-third of the young plant to force shoots to grow from the base of the plant. Allow these shoots to grow throughout the first season.

**Pomegranates:** Cut trees back to 2 to 2.5 feet at planting and allow 5 to 6 vigorous suckers, evenly distributed around the stem to develop. Since the fruits are borne only at the tips of new growth, judiciously shorten the branches to encourage the maximum number of new shoots on all sides, prevent straggly development, and achieve a strong well-framed plant.

**Blackberries and Raspberries:** These are biennial fruiting plants that may be trellised. They produce little or no fruit the first year. Little pruning is needed for blackberries and raspberries the first year.

**Blueberries:** The general rule is to remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the top of young plants when transplanting them to the field. Remove weak, twiggy growth near the base of the plant and side branches bearing flower buds. Remove flower buds the first and second year after planting to stimulate vigorous growth. Failure to remove flower buds from young plants can reduce canopy growth and delay plant establishment.

**Muscadines:** A plant consists of a trunk and selected side shoots referred to as cordons. The cordons are spread out and attached to the trellis support wires. Pruning initiates growth of short lateral shoots called spurs that come directly off the cordons. The new fruit develops on these spurs. All shoot growth from last summer should be cut back so that spurs will all have from 2 to 4 buds each. Prune along each of the cordons or main side branches to eliminate excess competition. Cut off excess growth so that there is at least a 6 inch spacing between each of the spurs.





Mark your calendars: spring is just around the corner!  
 Welcome the change in seasons with new ideas for your garden.  
**The South Georgia Native Plant & Wildflower Symposium**  
*is Wednesday, March 27, at*  
**The University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center.**  
 Regional experts will speak on landscaping with natives,  
 beneficial insects in the garden, growing natives from seed,  
 along with beautiful bog gardens and their unique pitcher plants.



For more information email Amy Carter: [abcarter@uga.edu](mailto:abcarter@uga.edu)  
 or call her at 229-391-6868 or 229-386-7274

**Georgia Clean Day 2013 – FEB. 27 - Spence Field in Moultrie (Sunbelt Ag Expo)**

The Georgia Department of Agriculture has secured a limited amount of federal funds to revitalize the Georgia Clean Day Program for 2013. Georgia Clean Day is a program that gives everyone an opportunity to discard old, unusable, or cancelled pesticides to a hazardous waste contractor for disposal. Pesticides in leaking containers or disposed of improperly may cause environmental damage by contaminating water supplies or harming people and wildlife. Some pesticides that have been used in the past are now in need of proper disposal.

Participation in the Clean Day Program is free but requires pre-registration.

**For the pre-registration form please contact your local County Extension Agent at 1-800-ASK-UGA1; in Dougherty County call 229-436-7216 for James Morgan.**

**★ Cancer Prevention School ★**

Dougherty County Cooperative Extension Office in the Candy Room

★ 10:00 am to 12:00 pm ★ Tuesdays, February 19 and 26, 2013 ★

Emphasis will be on mammograms, colonoscopies and pap smears for women over the age of 65 and the importance of regular testing.

There will be recipes, cooking demos and taste-testing.


















**This class is free to the public**  
**Please call 229-436-7216**  
**to pre-register so we'll know how many to prepare for.**

**WORD SEARCH**

**NATIVE WILDFLOWERS FOR GEORGIA** [homepage](#)

R B E L R F R O S T A S T E R B G I X Z W R R E  
 E U N R E W O L F T S O H G B U L F C O S S T L  
 W L S M A I D E N H A I R F E R N D O Y H J N T  
 O B F O J A C K I N T H E P U L P I T H A T N R  
 L O C B U A M E R I C A N B E A U T Y B E R R Y  
 F U U N Z T W I L D H Y D R A N G E A C U Q E M  
 L S K T J N H D R A E S T A C Y R I A H L W F N  
 L B J X V B G E E F I E H H N R Q S D K X Q N I  
 E U H N D I H C R O D E G N I R F E G N A R O A  
 B T T E K N A L B N A I D N I M L W L Z L T M T  
 N T E Q W S G A I Q B P P U W F B F B D O U A N  
 A E V I R G I N I A B L U E B E L L S O A X N U  
 C R I T J H A H H I U S U D S Y J W E L E Q N O  
 I C P Z R M L A B E E B T E L R A C S B D L I M  
 R U P I N K P R I M R O S E B T R L Q Y E D C D  
 E P T O D O O W G O D G N I R E W O L F R R P J  
 M C I L R A G E S L A F Q S U Y L U C P T V R R  
 A G Y P S Y F L O W E R X I D E O L Y M P A P Y

- [AMERICAN BEAUTYBERRY](#)
- [AMERICAN BELLFLOWER](#)
- [BULBOUS BUTTERCUP](#)
- [CINNAMON FERN](#)
- [FALSE GARLIC](#)
- [FLOWERING DOGWOOD](#)
- [FROST ASTER](#)
- [GHOST FLOWER](#)
- [GYPSYFLOWER](#)
- [HAIRY CAT'S EAR](#)
- [INDIAN BLANKET](#)
- [JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT](#)
- [MAIDENHAIR FERN](#)
- [MOUNTAIN MYRTLE](#)
- [ORANGE FRINGED ORCHID](#)
- [PINK PRIMROSE](#)
- [SCARLET BEEBALM](#)
- [SOUTHERN BLUEBELL](#)
- [THIMBLEBERRY](#)
- [VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS](#)
- [WILD HYDRANGEA](#)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>February</i>			<b>Women's Heart Week 1-7</b>		1 <i>Wear Red Day</i>	2 <i>Groundhog Day</i>
3 <i>Superbowl XLVII</i> Last Quarter ☾	4 	5 <i>World Pancake Day</i>	6 	7 	8 	9 
10  New Moon ●	11 	12 <i>Lincoln's Birthday</i>	13 	14 	<a href="#">The Great Backyard Bird Count 15-16-17</a>	
17  First Quarter ☽	18 <i>President's Day</i>	19	20	21	22 <i>Washington's Birthday</i>	23
24 	25  Full Moon ○	26 	27 	28 <i>National Chili Day</i>	<b>Amethyst</b> 	<b>Violets</b> 

American Heart Month

National Grapefruit Month

Exotic Vegetables Month

National Beans Month

National Banana Month

National Cherry Month

Florida Strawberry Month

Star Fruit Month

National Bird Feeding Month



If you want to attend our classes and have a special need because of a disability, please contact Dougherty County Extension at 229-436-7216 so we can arrange to accommodate you.