


PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLES

Improper pruning of crape myrtles can destroy the natural beauty of this quality shrub/small tree.

The only pruning crape myrtles require is to thin out the trunks on young trees leaving around 3-7 permanent trunks. Each year in early spring remove any new suckers that appear from the ground or from the main trunks. If you want a tree, choose the strongest trunk and concentrate on it. You can remove the seedpods, but realize that this is purely for aesthetic reason. Removing dried pods during the winter doesn't promote any more bloom during the summer.

 **Tip: from Parker County Master Gardener:** We have a crape myrtle we planted over 40 years ago that is taller than our one-story home. We never remove the seedpods, since they are located so high. It is a single trunk and has the appearance of a beautiful tree with exfoliating bark (peeling).

PROPER METHOD OF PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLE



This plant, pictured before pruning, needs to have all weak and dead stems removed.



Same shrub after removal of weak and interfering wood and base sucker growth.



Results of proper pruning are graceful, vigorous growth with distinctive shape.

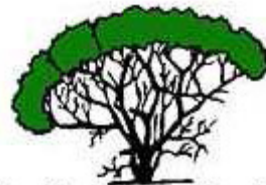
IMPROPER METHOD OF PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLE



Cutting at the dotted line is the usual course taken by those who prune shrubs.



The same plant after bad pruning, as indicated above. The sucker growth remains.



Results: the lovely natural shape of the shrub is lost, and bloom will be sparse.

Illustrations from