

# LAGERSTROEMIA PROPAGATION

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*Lagerstroemia*, or crapemyrtle, has been cultivated within the United States for over 100 years and is known as the "Lilac of the South", in much the same manner as the common lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*, is symbolic of colonial homesteads. The name "crapemyrtle" is derived from the crepe-like, crinkled and ruffled petals and the resemblance of the leaves to those of true myrtle. First illustrated and described by a Dutch physician and named by Carolus Linnaeus in 1759 for his close friend, Magnus Lagerstroem, crapemyrtle is a member of the loosestrife family.

More than 50 species of trees and shrubs of this genus are distributed in southeast Asia and Australia, the majority of which are tropical and amenable to cultivation only within warmer areas of the U.S. such as Florida and California. These plants (some of which have proven root hardy if mulched) flower on new wood and will produce vegetative growth that flowers the following summer. However, the flowers cannot equal those of plants grown in climates adapted to them. These plants are very adaptable to being grown in containers or even in perennial borders or as a grouping of shrubs.

At the Chicago Botanic Garden, Assistant Director, Kris Jarantoski has been obtaining cultivars of crapemyrtle from nurseries throughout the United States, planting, and evaluating them for mildew resistance as well as root hardiness. As new plants were needed for possible replacement in the evaluation blocks, propagation was called for.

Several methods were used to obtain the amount of rooted cuttings that were desired. According to the literature crapemyrtle is easy to propagate, so the standard methods were used, i.e.:

Leafy stem cuttings, 1 to 2 in. in length

Commercial root-inducing powder, e.g. Homo-Root C or Hormodin 1

Peat and perlite (50/50) rooting medium

Bottom heat of 72°F

Intermittent mist, "on" 6 sec. every 6 min.

These methods produced rooting percentages of 70 to 100% in most cultivars. However, there were several clones that were more difficult to root and clearly another method had to be tried. As these plants are tropical, hardwood cuttings seemed to be a doubtful

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method, but it was tried just the same. Three weeks at 41°F and then out to the misting bench produced nothing but rotted wood and mildew, but no rooting.

After a perusal of the propagation manual by Dirr and Heuser, it was decided to try another method that was old but new to us at the Garden. Dormant twigs, 6 in. long were cut from parent plants and put horizontally on a pan of peat and perlite, 50:50 and fastened down with florist pins, then put under intermittent mist (6 sec. every 6 min.) and 72°F bottom heat. These conditions caused the twigs to produce small shoots that were carefully excised from the parent and stuck as softwood cuttings, using HormoRoot C. Rooting was very quick, less than 2 weeks, but all these cuttings did not root, nor did all the twigs produce shoots, but enough was successful so that the necessary quantity of rooted cuttings was obtained.

This evaluation project is on-going, but the final results showing the best cultivars for the Chicago area will not be known for sometime. These plants gave a challenge to the propagation department and caused us to try something that was different and new to us.

*Lagerstroemia* is not the only plant being tested for the "Die Back" shrub project at the Chicago Botanic Garden, but the bulk of propagation information was gathered from this group of shrubs.

*Lagerstroemia* cultivars used in the "Die Back" shrub project:

*L. indica* 'Christiana', 'Dwarf Royalty', 'Jet Stream', 'New Snow', 'Pink Ice', 'Pink Ruffles', 'Rose Pink', 'Watermelon'.

Shrubs in the "Die Back" shrub project: *Buddleia*, *Callicarpa*, *Ceanothus*, *Clerodendron*, *Indigofera*, *Lagerstroemia*, *Rhus*, *Vitex*.

## REFERENCES

Egolf, Donald, 1972. *Horticulture Magazine*, August.

Dirr, Michael A. and Charles W. Heuser, Jr. 1987. The reference manual of woody plant propagation: from seed to tissue culture. Athens, Georgia: Varsity Press.

ALLAN ELLIOTT: Nick, you mentioned root piece cuttings with 'Pixie' and 'Malling 9'. Are there other cultivars with which you are using root cuttings?

NICK DUNN: We haven't had much experience with ornamentals. We have used some *Acer* species, but I can't give you the full particulars.

ROBERT MAZALEWSKI: Question for Kathy Freeland. About the *Lagerstroemia*, were the heel cuttings rooted under mist, and how long did they take to root?

KATHY FREELAND: It took about 3 weeks to root under mist, with bottom heat at about 70°F.

RALPH MOORE: You can take a group of soft *Lagerstroemia*

cuttings, put them loosely into an open container under mist, without any hormone, and they will root.

CHARLES TUBESING: Nick Dunn, what rootstock are you using for the medlar?

NICK DUNN: We are using quince. It causes some dwarfing.

### **CURTIS J. ALLEY AWARD OF MERIT**

Presented by Dennis Connor, Western Region President, at the Western Region Annual Banquet, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Our awardee for 1988 has served as President and Treasurer for the California Association of Nurserymen and has been involved with many other organizations—The Cal-Aggie Foundation at the University of California, Davis, the U.C. Foundation Plant Materials Service for clean seed and nursery stock, California's Governor George Deukmejian's Advisory Staff, the Sacramento Tree Foundation, the U.S. National Arboretum, Board member of Sacramento's Sumitomo Bank, and 54 other business, charitable, political, and educational committees.

He is a charter member of the Western Region and served as its President in 1973–74. He was IPPS International President in 1977.

He was born March 9, 1927, and has three children, Loren, George Samuel, and JoAnn, plus six grandchildren.

I am proud to announce his name, Mr. George Oki, Oki Nursery Company, Sacramento, California.