

The Passion for Water in the Garden

—Cynthia Upchurch

Water creates a fascination for everyone, but never more so than when it is moving. From young to old alike, we all seem to enjoy the sense of tranquility that moving water provides.

There are several options you may choose in quenching your desire to add water into your landscape scheme. Depending upon the size of the area you have available, there are many ideas for fountains, waterfalls and water gardens.

Today, water gardening has become quite popular. Possibly due to the introduction of the pool-liner and the preformed pool. There is such beauty to behold when viewing a pool alive with reds and yellows of goldfish along with brightly colored waxy blossoms of water lilies.

If you are considering a water garden, there are several factors to ponder. The most important one is the position in which a pond is placed that will decide more than any other single factor whether this idea can be translated into reality. Most aquatic plants enjoy full, uninterrupted sunlight. Fish likewise require as much sunlight as possible if they are to retain their brilliant colors and grow, although they do appreciate a shady corner in the heat of the day.

Location is crucial to both the beauty and survival of a pond. Visually the pond should be in the lower end of the landscape. Overhanging trees will cause leaves, blooms, etc. to accumulate in the pond's water. Decaying vegetation in the water generates toxic gases which can be lethal for fish, particularly during winter when the pond possibly becomes



covered with ice and these gases have no means of escaping into the air. Also, keep in mind that you will need access to an electrical supply if a fountain, waterfall, or pump is contemplated.

Now that you have decided whether you have such a spot for a water garden, do your homework by visiting nearby pond and garden centers. Experts will educate you on everything from the type of pool liner to choose, whether to use a pump and filter, the depth to dig your pond, what aquatic plants to choose, etc. An average size pond is around 2,200 gallons, 3 feet deep in a 100 square foot area. You can expect to spend approximately \$1,500 installing it yourself.

When stocking a pond with fish, take care to select healthy individuals with firm, meaty bodies and erect dorsal fins. It is important to wait until the plants have had time to become well-established before introducing the fish. Try such hardy fish as the fancy-tailed Comet or Fantail goldfish.

Tending a water garden is truly creating and growing an ecosystem. Once you install a pond, birds will come to drink, bees and butterflies will visit the flowers, and frogs will seek out the watery habitat. Whether to look at it from a patio window, to dine along beside it, or to sit at its edge and watch the fish darting and drifting in their on little world, you have created something special to enjoy for years to come.



Xeriscaping - Water Conservation in the Landscape

—*Pamela Lasota*

The population growth in Georgia over the last twenty years has caused a strain on water supplies. Household water consumption increases dramatically during the summer months, which are typically dry in our region. This increase is almost wholly attributed to outdoor watering. Water “bans” are common in most metro areas during dry periods and guilt sets in as we water our lawns and gardens.

In 1981, a group of professionals from the green (landscape) and blue (water) industries collaborated to develop a set of standards to address water conservation in the landscape. This approach to landscaping, called Xeriscaping, is a practical approach to planning water-wise landscapes. By using the Xeriscape approach, water consumption in the landscape can be reduced as much as 50%; as well as reducing the need for fertilizer and chemicals. There are seven principles to achieving the result of a landscape that conserves water and protects the environment.

The Seven Principles of Xeriscaping

- Planning & Design
- Soil Analysis & Improvement
- Plant Selection
- Limiting Turf Areas
- Efficient Irrigation
- Mulching
- Appropriate Maintenance

Planning and Design — There are many factors to consider in this part of the process. Creating shade areas and natural areas; shade areas lose less moisture, while natural areas are less densely planted. Watch sun exposure during different times of the day to determine where the driest areas are for proper plant selection. Determine water use zones: highly-visible areas, where regular watering would be required; moderate water areas, where watering is done only

on an as needed basis; and low water areas, where plants live on natural rainfall.

Soil Analysis — Take soil samples to the county Extension office to have them tested. The Extension agent will give recommendations on soil amendments or fertilizers based on the analysis.

Plant Selection — Plants should be selected for the site and not necessarily for the fact that they are drought tolerant. Shady, wet areas call for a much different plant than a dry, sunny location. Choose the plant for the location; consider its maximum growth, growth habit, texture and growth rate. All newly planted material will need

to be watered until it is established, whether it is drought tolerant or not. A little research on a plant’s cultural conditions will go a long way in xeriscaping.

Limiting Turf Areas — Some turf grasses can be drought tolerant; however, during droughts will not look very appealing. They may wilt or turn brown until watered again; however, if established, will probably live. Use turf for a specific function or design in a practical manner for areas that can be irrigated and avoid small or narrow areas that are difficult to irrigate or mow. If an area lacks adequate irrigation, use a more drought resistant turf such as Tifway Bermuda.

Efficient Irrigation — An irrigation system should distribute water evenly; avoid overspray on streets, sidewalks or buildings; and be set at the appropriate watering times (9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.). The application rate should be set so that proper penetration is achieved without runoff. Drip irrigation systems use 30 to 50% less water, with less evaporation and can be used at any time of day. Hand watering is a good way of watering individual plants showing stress; be sure to use a nozzle to avoid runoff.

Mulching — Mulching is the best way to retain moisture in the soil. It actually holds in moisture by reducing evaporation. Mulching also helps to prevent rapid runoff during watering periods. Natural areas of organic mulch need no water and are very low maintenance. Apply 3” of mulch around plants for maximum benefit. The best mulches are organic, such as, pine straw, shredded hardwood, pine bark or composted material.

Appropriate Maintenance — Use less fertilizer or fertilize less frequently to discourage new growth; use a slow-release fertilizer; avoid shearing plants. Mow turf at the appropriate heights. A good rule of thumb is to take off no more than one-third of the leaf at each mowing. Aeration also improves water penetration into soil. Keep weeds under control so that they are not competing with plants for water.

By following these seven principles, a valuable resource can be used more wisely while maintaining the beauty and integrity of your landscape.

Crapemyrtle: A Size to Fit All

—Rick Barnes

There are many plants originating from the orient that many gardeners wish had never been planted in southern soil. Invasive, rampantly growing plants with infamous names like Kudzu, Honeysuckle, and Privet were brought to the U.S. with the best of intentions but have become major plant pests.

The same can't be said, however, for the likes of the crapemyrtle. Introduced from China, *Lagerstroemia indica* has graced the southern landscape for decades with its showy panicles of crinkled flowers (hence the name - crapemyrtle) in white, red, pink, lavender, and rarely, bi-colored. The smooth bark is also distinctive, and many trees offer the added ornamental bonus of outstanding fall color.

Many of the introductions of *Lagerstroemia indica* grow quite large, ranging as tall as 30 feet. Their lack of cold-hardiness limits their use as trees to the moderate areas of the east, south, and western U.S. In colder climates, they are often used as small shrubs but may be killed to the ground during cold winters. Even in Atlanta, many specimen crapemyrtle were killed during the Christmas freeze of 1983 and in the Winter of 1985, when temperatures dropped to -8 degrees F!

In the humid South, other problems plague *Lagerstroemia indica* in the landscape. Many of the plants are susceptible to powdery mildew, a white, unsightly organism that gets on the plants where sunlight is limited and air circulation poor. Aphids attacking plants would secrete honeydew on the leaves, rendering them a prize growing area for sooty mold, another problem more unsightly than harmful.

Enter Dr. John Creech, former director of the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Dr. Creech collected a specimen of *Lagerstroemia fauriei* from a cold area 1200 feet above sea level in the mountains above Ku rio, Yakushima, Japan. Hybrids of *Lagerstroemia indica* and *Lagerstroemia fauriei* have, over the past 15 years produced a spectacular new series of crapemyrtles that come in a myriad of colors, sizes, growth habits, and bark characteristics. Further, these "National Arboretum Selections" were chosen for both insect and disease resistance, so the problems that plagued the old *Lagerstroemia indica* varieties aren't as apparent in the new cultivated varieties, or cultivars. Many of the National Arboretum selections are named for tribes of Native Americans, and a selected list is presented here.

This work done by the National Arboretum is so appropriate for the new American landscape for the simple reason that now there is a crapemyrtle that will fit into nearly any garden situation! So many times we have seen people compensate for a crapemyrtle planted in too small a space by cutting them back to sticks! This type of pruning is incorrect and often results in reduced flowering. Selecting the right crapemyrtle for the space is a better way, and now the right sizes and colors are there for the choosing.

Is your landscape in need of summer flowers, fall color, or winter interest with colorful bark? Choose a variety of the crapemyrtle, a plant-gem from the orient!

Sources cited for this article:

The National Arboretum Book Of Outstanding Garden Plants

by Jacqueline Heriteau and Marc Cathey

©1990 by The Simon and Schuster

Know It and Grow It

by Carl E. Whitcomb

©1983; Lacebark Publications, Stillwater, OK

Byers Nursery Company, Huntsville, Alabama



SOME CRAPEMYRTLE VARIETIES:

| NAME | FLOWER COLOR | MATURE HEIGHT (FEET) | SHAPE | INTERESTING BARK (COLOR) | FALL COLOR |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 'Seminole' | medium Pink | 8 | Compact Vase | | |
| 'Zuni' | medium Lavender | 10 | Low-Spreading | Yes | Red-Orange |
| 'Acoma' | White | 15 | Low-Spreading | Yes | Purple-Red |
| 'Apalachee' | Lavender | 12 | Dense Branching | Yes | Orange-Russet |
| 'Lipan' | Lavender | 12-18 | Dense Branching | White-Beige | |
| 'Osage' | Pink | 12 | Low Spreading | Cinnamon | Red-Dk. Red |
| 'Sioux' | Dark Pink | 14 | Gray-Brown | Maroon-Red | |
| 'Tuskegee' | Coral-Dk. Pink | 15 | Broad-Spreading | Red-Orange | |
| 'Yuma' | Dark Pink | 15 | Vase | Yes | Orange |
| 'Tuscarora' | Coral-Dk. Pink | 16 | Broad Vase | Red-Orange | |
| 'Muscogee' | Lavender | 24 | Open-upright | Gray-White | |
| 'Natchez' | White | 30 | Open-Upright | Cinnamon | Yellow-Red |



Help Us Help You!

The job of a landscaper is never easy, always demanding and sometimes even a little frustrating. We typically have a plan of action, concentrating on different areas or tasks with each visit. Because our crews work against the rain, heat, and cold however, sometimes things are missed. If this happens, or if you feel like your area has been neglected, please contact your Management Company and your concerns will be addressed.

Who We Are



Cultivated News is published four times a year by Nature Scapes, Inc., for fifteen years a provider of landscaping, maintenance, irrigation and floriculture services to the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Nature Scapes, Inc. is a charter member of GGIA — Georgia Green Industry Association, MALTA — Metro Atlanta Landscape & Turf Association and GTA — Georgia Turfgrass Association, Inc. We also belong to the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

Nature Scapes, Inc. operates a drug-free workplace as certified by the State Board of Workers' Compensation.

If you have any topics or questions you would like to see discussed or elaborated on in a future issue of the newsletter, please call and let us know.

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Here are a few ways that you can help prevent damage to yourself and your property. Your cooperation will also make our job easier and keep down the possibility of injury to our employees:

- ◇ Keep cars parked away from the curb lines and be sure your windows are up.
- ◇ Keep items such as dog chains, sprinklers and water hoses off lawn areas.
- ◇ If you have to approach one of our employees when they are using power equipment, please do so cautiously and from the front. They are likely to be wearing ear plugs. A tap on the shoulder might send them jumping and their equipment flailing.
- ◇ Never put yourself in danger by approaching someone while they are mowing.
- ◇ Walk dogs only in assigned areas and clean up after your pet. Watch out for signs indicating we have fertilized and/or treated lawn areas.
- ◇ Keep litter from becoming a problem by using containers and dumpsters.

If there is a problem, please approach only the Foreman on the job and discuss it with him. We respect our employees and hope you do, too. Remember “you can catch more flies with honey.”

If there is ever a problem with any of our employees, please feel free to call our office and report it. We hope that by working together we can keep all injuries and service accidents to zero; while always keeping your property in tip-top condition.



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