

Lagerstroemia - Growing Guide

Growing Lagerstroemia Indica

Commonly known as the 'Crepe Myrtle'

Crepe Myrtles are one of those slightly boring plants in the nursery whose foliage stares up at you month after month until, suddenly, in early autumn, they spring out into flower and you remember why they can be such attractive and useful plants.

Many will have seen lagerstroemia in its pomp in Italy or Spain where these plants grow into small trees. In the UK we are more used to seeing them as shrubs which only flower well after a hot summer. Since climate warming promises us more of these it is well worth trying a form of *L. indica* for yourself.

L. indica is hardy to at least -5°C and best grown in full sun against a hot wall to encourage it to flower. It is a deciduous Chinese tree which can grow up to 25ft but that is a bit optimistic in the UK. If it does form a woody trunk this has attractive peeling grey and brown bark.

The flowers appear from August to October and different forms which we grow have rose-pink, red or dark red flowers. These appear as large terminal panicles (6-8in long) of frilly flowers at the end of this year's growth. More mature plants that are pruned hard will produce more new growth and, in turn, more flowers.

L. indica grows quickly and will flower at a young age. It is likely to flower better in southern and eastern counties where summers are hotter and drier but we find a reasonable show in the nursery most years even in pots. The autumn colour is worthwhile too.

Propagation by cuttings on bottom heat early in summer has the best chance of success. We have yet to see our plants setting any seed.



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Lagerstroemia indica 'Alba'



Lagerstroemia indica 'Red Emperor'



Lagerstroemia indica 'Rosea'

