
Volume 13
THE CRAPE MYRTLE SPOILER

The southeast is being invaded by a relatively new bully. A pest that feeds on crape myrtles and pomegranate trees in Asia, apparently has traveled to North America, showing up in a Dallas, Texas suburb in 2004. First thought to be azalea scale, scientists later decided it probably was crape myrtle bark scale, or CMBS. By 2010 the scale had spread over the Dallas-Fort Worth area and has since moved quickly across the southeast, appearing in Louisiana by 2012. In October of 2013, the insect had arrived in Germantown, Tennessee, and now can be found in Collierville, Bartlett, Memphis, and parts of Fayette County.



The female CMBS has a white or gray woolly appearance and attaches to any part of the bark, from trunk to top, but what first draws one's attention to the infestation, is the black sooty mold on the tree. The scale imbibes the sweet sap under the tree bark. In itself this does not seem to do any great damage to the tree, but the sooty mold the insect produces is a most unattractive feature in a tree known for its handsome bark.

Systemic insecticides applied to the tree's root zone as a drench or soil injection, are a control method that seems to be the best remedy at present. There are several types available, but Bayer Advanced Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control is the one preferred by our local extension service.

Crape myrtle lovers (and there are a multitude of them) must hope for a quick and lasting solution to the offensive habits of this bad bug.

Photo provided by UT Extension-Shelby County

The Right Tree in the Right Place

Perhaps you've already decided which tree you want to plant, and found an excellent specimen. Where will it grow best? Sun or shade, dry or moist conditions, acid or alkaline soil- most of these questions can be answered by a good tree book from your local library, or going online to a .edu or .org site. There are certain problems that don't always come to mind when considering location. One important issue, especially in a city environment, is a tree's distance from power lines. Falling trees and branches are the main cause of power outages during storms. To avoid this situation consider the future height of the tree, which should not exceed twenty feet at maturity if planted under or close to a power line.



The Nashville Tree Foundation, a non-profit organization, has a list of trees approved for planting near power lines. Among those listed are the Red Buckeye, Kousa and Flowering Dogwoods, Yoshino and Kwanzan Cherries, Flame Maple and Japanese Maple, and the Forest Pansy Redbud. A complete list can be found at www.nashvilletreefoundation.org.

THE RED MULBERRY - A Native Tree You May Not Know Exists

Our only native mulberry, *Morus rubra*, is something of an enigma. Although it has enjoyed a presence in eastern North America since the sixteenth century, there is not much information available in tree books or garden magazines. The red mulberry can reach 70 feet in height, although in wooded areas it is generally an understory tree. It grows along with other hardwoods, but is seldom found growing near its own species. Until recently it remained uncultivated, perhaps partially due to its preference for moist sites such as valleys, flood plains, along-side streams, and at the edge of woodlands. Although it can get tall for a mulberry, the trunk is relatively short, and the branches are wide. A National Champion selection that measures 52` by 52` is located in Fayette County Tennessee according to Michael Dirr's Manual of Woody Landscape Plants. It's normally simple, ovate leaves may grow along-side mitten-shaped or attractive three-lobed leaves. Some years the leaves develop a bright, golden yellow color, though most years they are somewhat less attractive. The bark is grayish or dark brown with flat ridges.

The tree has much to offer; having a long life span of up to 125 years. Its general appearance makes it an interesting ornamental, but its most appealing feature is the fruit it produces, much coveted by birds, small animals and humans. The berries, which resemble blackberries, turn from green to red and then ripen into a deep purple by late summer, when they become juicy, sweet, edible fruits an inch or longer. The ripe fruit can be eaten fresh or used in jellies, jams, pies, juice and wine, that is, if the critters don't get there first. The trees can continue to produce fruit up until they reach 85 years of age.

Morus rubra can be a male or female tree, or can have both male and female flowers on a single tree. The



All articles were written by Jenny Sabatier, a Master Gardener and Urban Forestry Advisor.

easiest method of propagation seems to be layering, as stem cuttings and seeding are not always reliable.

The leaves of red mulberries support the larval needs of two of our prettiest butterflies, the mourning cloak, and the red admiral. Red mulberry is getting more breeding attention from government and university programs, as well as commercial growers, so we may have it available in catalogs and plant nurseries before too long.

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