

MUST-HAVE PLANTS

for the Late Summer Garden

As summer nears its end and the blooming power of many early season steadfast performers declines, consider incorporating these reliable and floriferous plants in the landscape to bridge the gap, painting the garden in color from mid-summer through the waning months of fall.

CRAPE MYRTLE (*Lagerstroemia indica*)

Eye-Catching and colorful — crape myrtle trees are the anchor in many late season gardens. Providing multi-season interest, crape myrtles dazzle in the summer landscape with shades spanning the color palette from white to lavender to magenta; they impress with orange and red foliage in the fall; and provide a striking silhouette in the winter with multi-stemmed trunks

and exfoliating bark. They average in size at maturity from twenty to thirty-five feet tall and twenty to thirty-five feet wide. Considered low-maintenance, crape myrtles prefer full sun and moist to average soil conditions and are considered deer resistant. Noteworthy varieties include 'Natchez' — white blooms, 'Muskogee' — light lavender blooms, 'Tuscarora' — coral blooms, and 'Tonto' — fuchsia-red blooms which, at eight feet high and ten feet wide, can be trained into a large shrub or tree form.

While most people opt for the tree-form varieties of crape myrtle, multi-stemmed shrubs suitable for smaller landscapes or mixed planting borders are also available in a wide range of flowering panicles and foliage colors to satisfy the inclinations of most homeowners. The dark maroon foliage of

deep red blooming 'Center Stage' — twelve feet high and eight feet wide at maturity — creates an exclamation point in the landscape and, with its upright habit, can be incorporated into smaller gardens where larger tree-form cultivars are unsuited.

PANICLE HYDRANGEAS (*Hydrangea paniculata*)

Another must-have in the late season garden, panicle hydrangeas paint the landscape in color from mid-summer well into the fall season. The flower shades of many long-lasting, large blooming panicles transition throughout the season — emerging lime green and pure white changing to muted pink and burnt red as the weather begins to cool. They have an average growth rate, prefer full to part sun conditions and attract butterflies.



Panicle Hydrangeas • *Hydrangea paniculata*



Crape Myrtle • *Lagerstroemia Indica*

- 'Limelight' is considered the classic panicle hydrangea with characteristic lime-green flowers emerging in mid-summer and transitioning to deep pink in the fall. They are also the largest of this hydrangea species and, at eight feet tall and wide, can be trained into an accent tree, well suited for the formal foundation garden or landscape border. Other cultivars ideal for the patio garden or smaller landscape include:
- 'Little Lime' hydrangea, a smaller version of the standard 'Limelight' with similar color variations, however, at only five feet high and wide, easily fits into a foundation garden or patio border.
- 'Little Quick Fire' is an early flowering panicle hydrangea blooming about a month earlier than most. With its diminutive stature at four feet high and wide, it makes an ideal addition to a container patio grouping.
- 'Vanilla Strawberry' hydrangea, sports large flower heads on strong, upright red stems with blooms starting out white, transitioning to pink then finish-

ing as red at the end of the season. At six feet high and five feet wide 'Vanilla Strawberry' makes an eye-catching late summer accent.

- 'Bobo' hydrangea, a dwarf cultivar maturing to only three feet high by four feet wide, shines in a patio container grouping with its floriferous habit and large white panicles.

Tolerating a high degree of salt spray and sunny conditions, both crape myrtles and panicle hydrangeas thrive in coastal environments, making them ideal candidates for the LBI garden. However, since both plants prefer moist soil conditions, it is advisable to install an automatic irrigation system or battery-operated soaker hose to maintain vigor and aesthetics, especially during the heat of the day.

Supplement these late summer beauties with 'Autumn Joy' (*Sedum spectabile*), Black-Eyed

Susan (*Rudbeckia spp.*), 'Montauk' daisy (*Nipponanthemum nipponicum*) and asters (*Aster spp.*) to add enduring visual appeal and prolong the season and for friends and family, butterflies, and hummingbirds to enjoy. —**Elaine Sisko, Reynolds Landscaping Staff Writer**



To purchase and learn more about these and other species of crape myrtles and panicle hydrangeas or to discover additional plant material suitable for the late summer garden, visit **Reynolds Landscaping and Garden Center**, located at 201 East Bay Avenue in Manahawkin. To check on the availability of a specific cultivar, call **Reynolds Garden Center** at 609-597-6099.