

Forcing Lagerstroemia GreatMyrtle™ into bloom for late April/early May flowering can only be done effectively by growers located in South Florida. Lagerstroemia flowering is dependent on the accumulation of warm temperatures and full sunlight. Failure to provide consistent night temps above 65 degrees and day temps ranging from 75 to 85 degrees combined with strong sunlight for at least eight weeks straight will delay flowering. Retailers who wish to have blooming crepe myrtles for Mother's Day sales must buy finished blooming GreatMyrtle from designated growers in South Florida. Growers farther north in FL will not be able to reliably provide finished plants in bloom for early May!

Growers in S FL can utilize the following growing schedule to obtain May 1 or earlier flowering in 3G containers:

- Week 4 2024 (January 22) - Plant one 3 ½" branched liner or one 50 cell liner in 3G "cheater" (true 2G) container
- Week 7 - 8 2024 - Apply aggressive hard shear to plants when new shoots emerge at approximately 2" at approximately 3 - 4 weeks after planting. Multiple pass-throughs for plants that take longer to break may be necessary in week 9.
- Week 10 or 11 - Apply another shear to plants to form a uniform branching canopy. **Important: Do NOT hard shear plants after week 12**
- Weeks 13 - 15 - Remove any stray elongated shoots from plants to maintain uniformity.

For May 1 flowering in true 1G containers:

- Week 9 2024 (February 26) - Plant one 50-cell liner in true 1G container.
- Week 11 or 12 - Apply aggressive hard shear to plants once new shoots are 2"
- Weeks 13 - 14 - Remove any stray elongated shoots. **Important: Do NOT hard shear plants after week 13**

Tips:

- For best results and uniformity, maintain uniform moisture levels in media. Do not run plants too dry or wet!
- Slow-release fertilizer top dress recommended.
- Scout for thrip and control, especially in later stages of bud development.
- Some growers using larger pot sizes may want to start as early as week 50, 2023 (December 11) in order to build a fuller plant canopy by adding at least one to two additional shears to the crop.
- Scout regularly for pests see resources below

Growers in more northern locations in N FL, GA, MS, AL, LA, SC, or TX can bring Lagerstroemia into bloom in as little as nine (9) weeks (or twelve (12) weeks with proper shearing) planting in early April with a large (3 ½") vernalized liner or a 50 cell liner in a 3G container. Plants can start blooming as early as June 10. Failure to provide consistent night temps above 65 degrees and day temps ranging from 75 to 85 degrees combined with strong sunlight for at least eight weeks straight will delay flowering.

Growers even farther north - zone 5 and zone 6 - would simply plant in early May and expect natural season blooming in ten (10) to twelve (12) weeks depending on sustained warm temperatures and full sunlight. However, it is important to realize that to build a sufficient plant body, at least one decent hard shear is necessary which delays blooming by about 3 weeks during summer growing. ***For evenly shaped, quality plants, growers should shear plants aggressively as soon as new growth emerges which can be anywhere between two to three weeks after planting assuming sufficiently warm temperatures.***

Removal of stray elongated shoots will be necessary to maintain uniformity. For growers in these zones, to attain a truly full, robust plant in a 3G container would most likely require holding the crop over winter and forcing the next spring. Unless forced in a warm greenhouse, the plants would flower naturally in mid-summer.

Resources: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/crapemyrtle-bark-scale>

