

April 11, 2004

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Gregg County

Crape Myrtle Care

Summer in Texas would not be complete without the abundance of crape myrtle flowers that will soon be seen over all of East Texas. Proper fertilization and pruning usually result in a long display of flowers of three months or more.

Fertilizer recommendations are best made after reviewing soil test results, but a general recommendation of 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of root area is sufficient for most trees and shrubs. This can be repeated again in the late fall. The first application should be made just before new growth begins in the spring. The number of square feet in the root area is determined by the branch spread of the tree.

The most significant disease affecting crape myrtle is powdery mildew. This can be controlled by spraying with a fungicide, used according to label instructions. Mildew is usually less of a problem if plants are located in open sunny areas where air circulation is good.

Pruning is best done in late winter before new growth begins. The structure and trunks of crape myrtle are among their chief assets; therefore, pruning should involve only removing dead and twiggy growth to expose the sculptural character of the tree.

For dwarf varieties or in shrub borders where crape myrtles may be grown only for their blooms, severe pruning will help insure larger and more prolific flowers. The pruning of faded and seedy blossom heads will usually promote repeat blooming late in the summer.

For something different, try some of the dwarf type crape myrtles in tubs or pots on the terrace. They do best in sunny areas, and are as satisfactory for container use as they are in the ground.

Forage and Livestock Field Day

The Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Overton will be hosting a Forage and Livestock Field Day on Thursday, April 15, 2004. Registration for the field day activities will begin at 8:00 a.m. at the research center headquarters building. Registration is free, open to the public.

Field Tours will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Tours will include Ryegrass and Small Grains, Bermuda Grass Trials, Beef Cattle Temperament and Stress, and Forage Production, Grazing Management and Legumes.

Following the catered barbeque lunch, which only cost \$7.00 will be several programs addressing Beef Industry Issues. The afternoon session will begin at 1:30 p.m. and will adjourn at 3:30 p.m. Topics include: Individual Animal ID, Legislative Impacts on Agricultural Operations and Food Safety: Farm to Table.

The Overton center is located one mile from downtown Overton on Hwy.3053. Coming from south of Overton, take 135 into town. At Overton's single red stop light, take a left, go across the railroad tracks and turn right immediately after the Brookshires Market. Look for the large white sign on the right side of the road identifying the Overton Center.

On the Web, maps to the center can be found at:

http://overton.tamu.edu/contact_1.htm.

Coming from the north, take the 3053 exit from I-20. Look for a row of six glass-paned greenhouses approximately six miles south of State Hwy. 31.

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