

Pruning 101-Easy Crape Myrtle

Pruning



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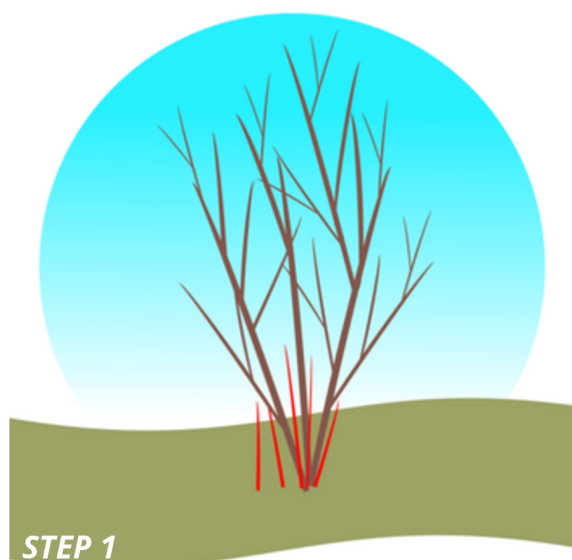
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While crape myrtles will grow and bloom without pruning, a neater, tidier and more floriferous tree can be maintained with proper pruning. And while decapitating crape myrtle trees in the style semi-jokingly referred to as "crape murder" is still common, it is not the correct way to maintain these beautiful trees. While proper crape pruning is more time-consuming, the results are more attractive and lead to a healthier, better shaped tree over time.

Proper crape pruning is not difficult. You'll need a good set of hand pruners, pole pruners and possibly a hand saw and a ladder.

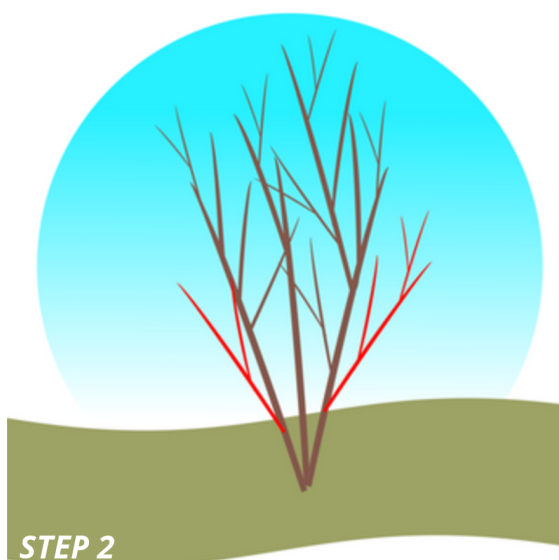
HOW TO PRUNE A CRAPE MYRTLE

(We'll assume you know how to make basic pruning cuts. If you're unsure, see illustrations in our pruning guide [here](#).)



STEP 1

Remove all suckers from the base



STEP 2

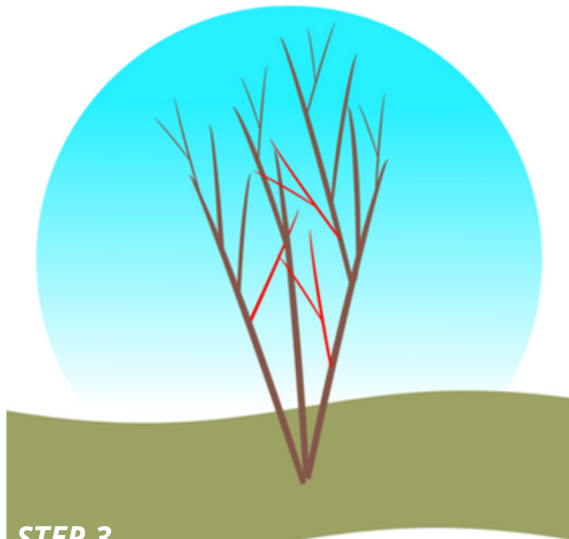
Remove side branches from the main trunk up to four feet or so



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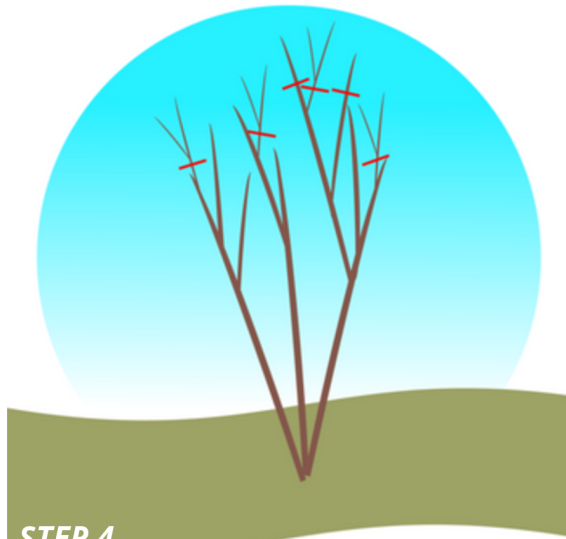
"Where your imagination takes root"

Crape Myrtle Pruning cont.



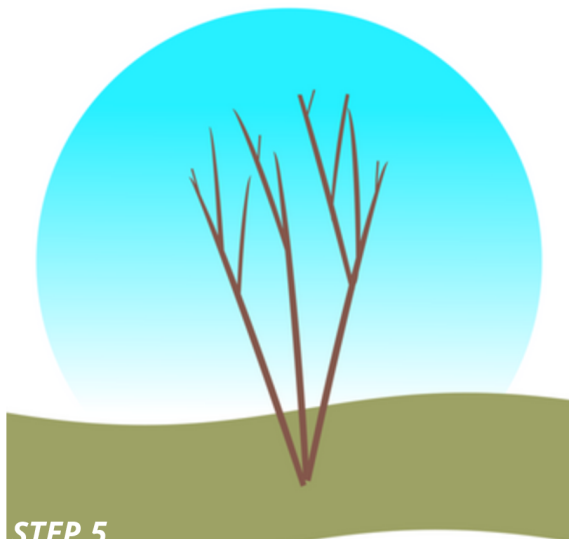
STEP 3

Remove higher branches that grow inward toward the center of the tree instead of outward, and any crossing or rubbing branches.



STEP 4

Optional (some trees are too tall for this to be practical): Remove twiggier branches the width of a pencil or smaller back to the connecting branch. Cut branch tips back to the point that they are as thick as a pencil and even off any irregular branches.



STEP 5

Stand back and look at the tree. Are there any dead branches, or branches growing in a weird direction that should also be removed? No? Good-you're done. And your crape will look great next summer.

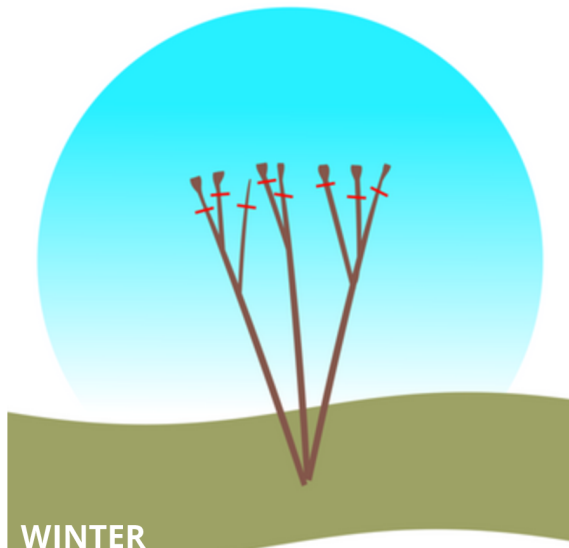


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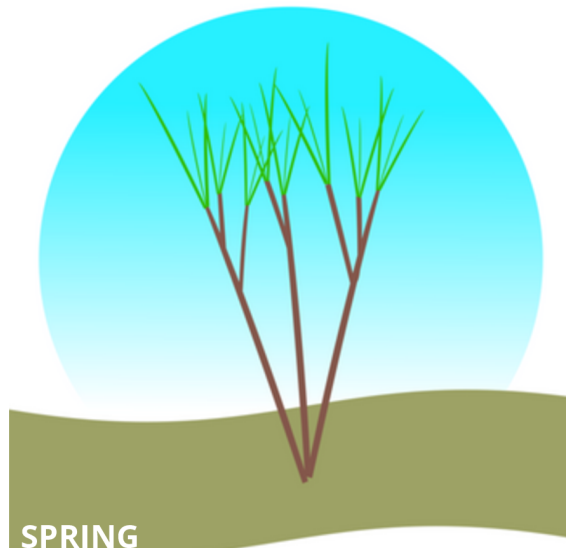
RENOVATING "CRAPE MURDER"

Let's say you've inherited a crape myrtle that's been chopped in previous years. Can it be fixed? The answer is yes—in most cases you can repair previous poor pruning. It will take a few years to reverse the damage but here's what to do:



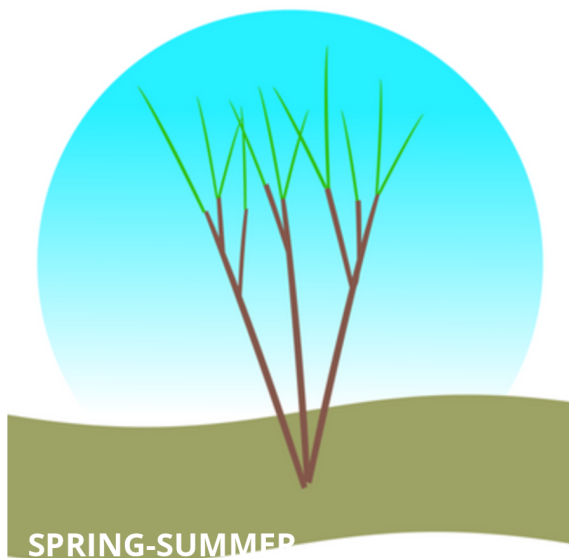
WINTER

Prune off the knobs, leaving clean trunks. For a more natural look, vary the height of the cuts a bit.



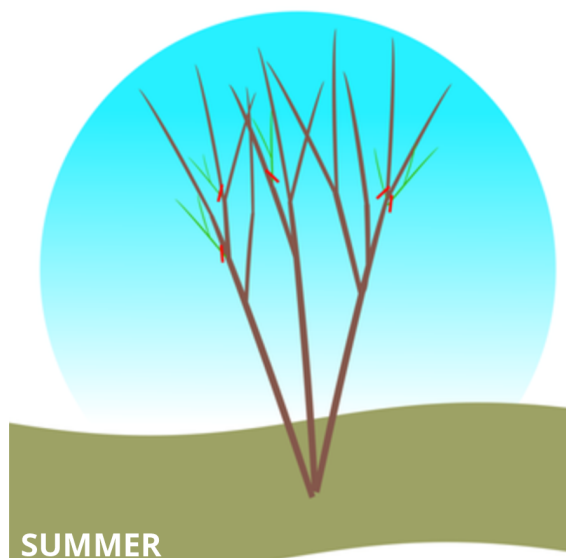
SPRING

In spring, the trunks will sprout new growth.



SPRING-SUMMER

Select on or two sprouts per trunk only and prune off the rest.



SUMMER

Remove any small sprouts that develop near the base of the shoots you choose to keep.



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