

Summertime plants and trees



News photo by Mike DiCarlo

Crepe myrtle trees located in the Gateway parking lot are in full bloom.

Crepe myrtle: beautiful by any name

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This is the first installment of articles offered each season by Terra Landscape about plants that are in bloom in Rossmoor in the current season. In the summertime, the crepe myrtles are in bloom.

Whether you spell it “crape

myrtle” (Sunset Western Garden Book), “crepe myrtle” (common spelling in the Southern United States), “crapemyrtle” (U.S. Department of Agriculture) or “grape myrtle” (recently overheard on a walk in Rossmoor), you’ll have to agree that these small flowering trees have a lot to offer. Most noticeable are the huge summertime flowers in white and shades of red, pink

and purple. But they also sport colorful foliage in autumn and lovely mottled bark year-round. Deer aren’t interested and the trees need little water once established. What’s not to like?

Species crepe myrtles are highly susceptible to mildew, but the USDA sponsored the introduction of hybrids that are both cold-hardy and quite resistant to mildew. These grace-

Continued on page 5A

A close look at the crepe myrtle in Rossmoor

Continued from page 1A

ful trees come in a variety of sizes and colors and are named for Native American tribes such as Arapaho, Comanche, Hopi and Zuni.

The botanical name for the genus, *Lagerstroemia*, honors the memory of the Swedish plant collector Magnus von Lagerström, who discovered the original specimens in China and Korea. Thank you, Magnus!

Next time you're walking around Rossmoor, take note

of the many different crape myrtles dotted throughout the landscape. Spherical flower buds begin to swell in early summer and then burst into glorious bloom in midsummer. Check them out and find your favorite color!

Tom Wilhite is designer and construction manager for Terra Landscape. He was senior editor of the past three editions of the Sunset Western Garden Book and has written several books on design and horticulture.