



SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

15185 Murphy Avenue
San Martin, CA 95046
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Three New, Mildew Resistant Crape Myrtles.

In 1978 the U.S. National Arboretum released three new and distinct, mildew resistant, Lagerstroemia cultivars; these were named after the pattern of their previously released Crape Myrtles - 'Muskogee', 'Natchez' and 'Tuscarora'.

These have been produced as a result of a breeding program, which had been initiated at the National Arboretum in the late 1950s and conducted by Donald R. Egolf. The objective of this program had been to combine a high level of mildew resistance with superior ornamental characters. Earlier releases from this programme had included seven cultivars of Lagerstroemia indica - which have since become known as the Indian Tribe series - 'Catawba', 'Conestoga', 'Potomac' and 'Powhatan' were released in 1967 and 'Cherokee' and 'Seminole' followed in 1970 - all of these cultivars have shown some resistance to the incidence of Powdery Mildew (Erysiphe lagerstroemia), but have subsequently been shown to be suspect under severe infective conditions.

These three new cultivars have shown a significantly higher tolerance of Powdery Mildew under field conditions than any of the L. indica cultivars - and, as yet, no infection has been observed on any plants growing here.

They are distinguished from the previous Indian Tribe series by the fact that they all have Lagerstroemia fauriei in their parentage: this has not only imparted the improved powdery mildew resistance but has also provided a greater degree of hardiness - these three are all reliably hardy to zone 7b.

L. 'Muskogee' is a hybrid selection from a controlled cross between L. indica 'Pink Lace' and L. fauriei.

This plant can be grown as a multiple stemmed, large shrub or as a single stemmed tree to a height of at least 21 feet. The exfoliating bark of the vigorous upright trunks is a medium grey-orange, brown. The heavy, glossy, dark green leaves can be up to four inches long and turn good reds and yellows in the autumn.

The flowers are a light lavender pink and are borne in abundant panicles which may attain 7in by 4in (18cm x 10cm).

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L. 'Natchez' is a hybrid selection from a controlled cross between L. indica and L. fauriei.

The outstanding characteristic of this cultivar is the magnificent, dark cinnamon-brown, exfoliating bark which is produced on the mature stems - a feature which remains throughout the year. The glossy, dark green leaves are of average size and produce good autumnal hues of oranges and reds.

The pure white flowers are borne in long panicles of up to 12in by 6in (30cm x 15cm).

L. 'Tuscarora' is a hybrid selection from a controlled cross between L. indica 'Cherokee' and L. (indica x fauriei) 'Bashams Party Pink'.

This plant can be successfully grown as a multi-stemmed shrub or as a single stemmed tree. It has a light brown, highly ornamental, exfoliating bark on the mature stems and trunks. It is a vigorous plant and will probably exceed the other two cultivars in size. The leaves are large and a heavy, glossy, dark green, which are tinged with red when young.

The flowers provide the most striking characteristic of this plant and are a distinct and unusual colour of dark coral pink; they are produced in large panicles of up to 12in by 8in (30cm x 20 cm) over a long season and in great profusion.

*** We assess this plant as possibly one of the best and most striking of Crape Myrtle introductions of recent years. ***

Young plants are currently available from the Foundation and enquiries should be directed to the Nursery Manager, Barbara Coe.