

CHORES

Spent flowers may have bloom left

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With fall approaching, annual flowers draw nearer to the end of their blooming lives. But by deadheading spent flowers, you may be able to squeeze some extra blooms from your plants.

Deadheading simply means to cut off or pinch off dead or fading blooms. Plants spend a lot of energy producing flowers. Deadheading encourages plants to use their energy to produce new blooms instead of seed.

Some plants put out so many tiny blooms that deadheading them would be a full-time job. Instead, you should shear them. Shearing means taking off half or so of the plant with clippers, similar to trimming a hedge. Bushy plants such as alyssum and perennials such as *Salvia greggii* and Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) are examples of plants that should be sheared. (You also should shear most salvias when they are dormant to prepare them for spring blooming.)

You won't have to deadhead the flowers on some plants. Many modern hybrids drop their old, shriveled blossoms on their own. This group includes bedding begonias, impatiens, cleome, some nicotianas and morning glories.

Ornamental shrubs

Deadheading roses is a bit more complicated, but still easy. If your rose bush is in its first growing season, rose experts say, remove the spent flower above a leaf with three leaflets, closest to the flowers. On established bushes, trim the stem back to a five-leaflet leaf.

By cutting off the spent flowers on crape myrtles, you may encourage new blooms. Dale Groom, Texas Cooperative Extension horticulturist for Dallas County, says the best time for deadheading has passed, but some varieties may re-bloom.

Other blooming shrubs that you can deadhead include rose of Sharon and hydrangeas, according to Texas Cooperative Extension.



Shasta daisy



Purple coneflower

Perennials

Coreopsis

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum*)

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Daylilies are a special case. Be sure to remove both the flowers and the fruit, or seed pods, when they are still small.



Daylily

Annuals

Ageratum (*Ageratum houstonianum*)

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Copper Canyon daisy (*Tagetes lemmonii*)

Bachelor buttons (*Gomphrena globosa*)

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Cleome (*Cleome hassleriana*)

Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)

Pinks (*Dianthus spp.*)

Larkspur (*Consolida ambigua*)

Marigolds (*Tagetes*)

Zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*)

Phlox (*Phlox drummondii*)

If you have neglected to deadhead this summer, many of your annuals may already have gone to seed. But gardeners always get a second chance; remember to deadhead next year.



Zinnia



Ageratum

Hybrids for all reasons

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grow only between 8 and 10 feet tall. The petite crape fits easily under the eaves of a house, and they won't block pathways in a narrow side yard or entrance. Framed by windows or sited just off a courtyard or patio, these smaller-scale plants are easier to appreciate at eye level. They also can be planted in large containers or make a low, flowering hedge.

Many of the smaller crape hybrids were developed at the U.S. National Arboretum's breeding program in Washington, D.C. Named after Native American tribes, these hybrids are highly resistant to powdery mildew. Here are six of the best. All are 8 to 10 feet tall and wide and can be trained as multi- or single-stemmed trees or grown as shrubs with foliage all the way to the ground.

White: White-flowered 'Acoma' blooms for three months. The leaves turn reddish-purple in the fall, and its cream-colored bark peels away to reveal tannish bark beneath. 'Acoma' is a smaller, more cold-tolerant version of the popular 'Natchez' crape myrtle. If trained into a single-stemmed tree form, the weeping nature of 'Acoma' shows off billowy flower clusters at eye level. 'White Chocolate' is unique in the crape myrtle world:

New leaves emerge a chocolate burgundy color. 'White Chocolate' grows 8 to 9 feet tall, and the white blooms contrast with this dark foliage to perfection. In autumn, its leaves turn a vivid orange.

Pink: 'Hopi' is one of the best pastels. The light pink flowers bloom for more than three months. In autumn, leaves turn reddish-orange, and winter highlights its gray exfoliating bark.

Red: True red crape myrtles have been elusive, but no longer. 'Cheyenne' has siren-red blooms for up to three months of the summer, followed by yellow-orange fall foliage. Its light brown bark peels away to reveal reddish-tan wood.

Fuchsia: 'Tonto' is another attention-grabbing crape myrtle that blows pastel shades out of the water. The 8- to 9-foot shrubs are covered with dark fuchsia flowers for more than two months each summer. In autumn, 'Tonto' keeps up the colorful show by holding onto its maroon fall foliage longer than most other crape myrtles.

Purple: 'Zuni' has large purple flowers and blooms over three months. In autumn, the foliage turns orange and red. The creamy gray bark peels nicely in winter.

All crape myrtles are low maintenance. They aren't picky



MILTON HINNANT/Staff Photographer

Left as a shrub, the slow-growing 'Tonto' will be blanketed in flowers.

about soil. Once established, they require irrigation only during drought conditions. And they need only occasional fertilizing with a basic lawn fertilizer.

But you should prune "to remove suckers from the base of the plants if you want it to be a tree form," says Mr. Cabrera. "Otherwise we recommend people only remove the dead or damaged wood. Heavy pruning is not good for the overall health of the plant and will actually decrease and delay flowering." The only must-have is full sun.

Several Texas cities assert bragging rights to crape myrtles, often called lilacs of the South. Paris, the Crape Myrtle City, lays claim to the first crape myrtles in

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6 Links: Log on for links to Texas A&M University crape myrtle database and driving maps to Waxahachie and the Crape Myrtle Trails of McKinney.

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the state and the longest-running crape myrtle queen coronation ceremony. Waxahachie, which calls itself the Crape Myrtle Capital of Texas, crowns a crape myrtle princess at its annual July Fourth Crape Myrtle Festival and has mapped out a driving trail for visitors.

The newest, and perhaps most ambitious, entrant to the field is McKinney. The Crape Myrtle Trails of McKinney Foundation has planted nearly 3,000 crape myrtles in medians and on roadsides along a designated trail. The nonprofit group hopes to eventually plant up to 100,000 specimens.

This fall, they will begin planting the World's Collection of Crape Myrtles, to include every known variety, at the Craig Ranch development in McKinney.

Hillary Gant is a certified landscape professional and a Dallas freelance writer.



MILTON HINNANT/Staff Photographer

Shown above as a shrub, 'Acoma' is a popular choice because of the interesting way its bark peels, if trained into a tree form.



ACOMA

With pure white flowers, it blooms for three months starting in late June. 'Acoma' has reddish-purple foliage in the fall and grows into a broad, strong shrub or can be trained into a small multi-trunk tree. It is especially nice trained as a single-stemmed (called a standard in the trade) tree, letting it branch out at 5 or 6 feet so the flowers can be appreciated at eye level. 'Acoma' is highly recommended by national crape myrtle experts for its interesting creamy, exfoliating bark, long bloom period and powdery mildew resistance. 'Acoma' and the other varieties listed here are from the National Arboretum's breeding program in Washington, D.C., and they are named after American Indian tribes, except for 'White Chocolate'. 12 feet by 12 feet. Hardy to zone 7.



TONTO

Dark magenta to fuchsia flowers start in mid-July and bloom for more than two months. 'Tonto' grows slowly into a compact vase shape. It will be covered with flowers if left as a shrub or is useful as a multi- or single-trunk tree. 'Tonto' has maroon fall color and is recommended for its exfoliating bark, long bloom period and powdery mildew resistance. 8 feet by 8 feet. Hardy to zone 7.



ZUNI

'Zuni' has large medium to dark purple blooms that show in early July and keep blooming for more than 100 days. It grows in a compact vase shape with almost leathery foliage. In autumn, 'Zuni' turns an outstanding reddish-orange. It can be used as a broad shrub or pruned into a small multi-stemmed tree with a rounded canopy. It also has gray exfoliating bark and is resistant to powdery mildew. 8 feet by 8 feet. Hardy to zone 7.



CHEYENNE

Its siren-red flowers bloom up to three months starting in late June. 'Cheyenne' grows in a rounded shape with yellow-orange fall color and exfoliating light brown bark, which reveals reddish-tan bark beneath. 8 feet by 8 feet. Hardy to zone 7.



WHITE CHOCOLATE

The 'White Chocolate' specimen has unique, dark burgundy foliage that contrasts nicely with its white flowers. Starting in early July, 'White Chocolate' is covered with flowers for more than two months. In autumn the leaves turn a vivid orange. In the landscape, 'White Chocolate' can be used as a soft, mounding shrub or trained into a multi- or single-trunk tree. All the National Arboretum's introductions are bred to be superior performers in the landscape with powdery mildew resistance and cold hardiness. 8 feet by 8 feet. Hardy to zone 7.

Photos by EVANS CAGLAGE/Staff Photographer



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