SOFTWARE & TECH

Lagerstroemia Natchez United States National Arboretum

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795581168497658

Introduction: A Living Legacy of Botanical Excellence

Few ornamental trees have captured the hearts of American gardeners as thoroughly as the **Lagerstroemia Natchez United States National Arboretum** introduction. This remarkable cultivar, known botanically as *Lagerstroemia indica* × *fauriei* 'Natchez', represents one of the most successful breeding achievements in modern horticulture. Since its release in 1978, the Natchez crape myrtle has become a staple in landscapes across the southern United States and beyond, beloved for its stunning white flower clusters, exfoliating cinnamon-brown bark, and exceptional resistance to powdery mildew. But the story of this tree is not simply one of beauty—it is a story of scientific innovation, careful selection, and a decades-long commitment by the **United States National Arboretum**to create better plants for the American people. In this article, we will explore the origins, characteristics, cultivation, and enduring impact of this truly exceptional tree.

The Origin Story: How the United States National Arboretum Created a Icon

A Vision for Better Crape Myrtles

In the mid-twentieth century, the crape myrtles commonly available in American nurseries were plagued by two major problems: susceptibility to powdery mildew and a lack of cold hardiness. Dr. Donald Egolf, a research horticulturist at the **United States National Arboretum** in Washington, D.C., recognized an opportunity. He envisioned a new generation of crape myrtles that would combine the ornamental qualities of the popular *Lagerstroemia indica* with the disease resistance and hardiness of the Japanese species *Lagerstroemia fauriei*. Egolf's breeding program, launched in the early 1960s, was methodical and ambitious. He collected seeds and cuttings from around the world, cross-pollinated thousands of flowers, and evaluated countless seedlings over many years. The result was a series of landmark introductions that would redefine the crape myrtle market, and **Lagerstroemia Natchez** was among the first and finest.

The Birth of Natchez: A Hybrid Triumph

The Natchez crape myrtle was the result of a controlled cross between *Lagerstroemia indica* (a white-flowered selection) and *Lagerstroemia fauriei*, a species native to Japan that Egolf had introduced to the breeding program. The offspring displayed a remarkable combination of traits: the large, showy flower panicles of the indica parent and the robust health, attractive bark, and cold hardiness of the fauriei parent. After years of rigorous testing at the **United States National Arboretum**and at cooperating institutions across the country, 'Natchez' was officially released to the nursery trade. It was named after the historic city of Natchez, Mississippi, a nod to the deep Southern roots of crape myrtle cultivation. The release was a landmark event, and the tree quickly became a bestseller.

Distinctive Features of Lagerstroemia Natchez

Stunning White Flower Clusters

The most immediately eye-catching feature of the **Lagerstroemia Natchez**is its spectacular summer bloom. From early July through September, the tree is covered in large, dense panicles of pure white flowers. Each panicle can reach up to 12 inches in length and is composed of hundreds of individually crinkled petals, giving the blooms a soft, cloud-like appearance. Unlike some white-flowering trees, the blossoms of Natchez hold their color well without fading or browning prematurely. The flowers are also attractive to pollinators, including bees and butterflies, adding ecological value to the landscape.

Exfoliating Bark: Four-Season Interest

While many trees offer seasonal beauty, **Lagerstroemia Natchez**provides visual interest throughout the entire year, largely due to its extraordinary bark. As the tree matures, the outer bark peels away in thin, papery flakes to reveal a smooth, polished trunk in shades of cinnamon, tan, and light gray. This exfoliating bark creates a stunning textural effect, especially in winter when the leaves have fallen. The trunk becomes a sculptural focal point in the garden, and it is one of the primary reasons gardeners choose this cultivar over others.

Fall Foliage Color

In autumn, the leaves of the Natchez crape myrtle turn vibrant shades of orange and red. While not as uniformly brilliant as some maples, the fall color is reliable and attractive, providing a final burst of warmth before winter sets in. The combination of autumn foliage and exfoliating bark makes Natchez a true multi-season performer.

Exceptional Disease Resistance

One of the greatest achievements of the **United States National Arboretum**breeding program was the introduction of superior disease resistance into the crape myrtle gene pool. 'Natchez' is highly resistant to powdery mildew, a fungal disease that disfigures the leaves and flowers of older, indica-type varieties. It also shows good resistance to Cercospora leaf spot. This means that Natchez trees remain healthy and attractive throughout the growing season with minimal need for fungicide applications.

Growing and Caring for Lagerstroemia Natchez

Ideal Growing Conditions

Lagerstroemia Natchezis a remarkably adaptable tree, but it performs best when given the right conditions. Plant it in a location that receives full sun—at least six to eight hours of direct sunlight per day. Full sun is essential for maximizing bloom production and promoting the development of the characteristic bark. The tree is not particularly fussy about soil type, but it prefers well-drained, slightly acidic loam. It can tolerate clay and sandy soils once established, but waterlogged conditions should be avoided.

Hardiness and Climate Range

One of the key improvements of the Natchez cultivar over older crape myrtles is its superior cold hardiness. The **United States National Arboretum**specifically selected for this trait, and Natchez is reliably hardy in USDA zones 6 through 10. In colder parts of zone 6, the tree may die back to the ground in severe winters, but it will regrow from the roots and still bloom the same year on new wood. This resilience has expanded the potential growing range of crape myrtles northward, allowing gardeners in the Mid-Atlantic, Ohio Valley, and even parts of New England to enjoy this magnificent tree.

Planting and Establishment

When planting **Lagerstroemia Natchez**, dig a hole that is two to three times wider than the root ball but no deeper. Place the tree so that the top of the root ball is level with the surrounding soil. Backfill with native soil,

water thoroughly, and apply a layer of organic mulch around the base, keeping the mulch away from the trunk. Water regularly during the first growing season to establish a deep, extensive root system. Once established, Natchez is quite drought-tolerant.

Pruning and Maintenance

A common mistake with crape myrtles is excessive pruning, often called "crape murder." **Lagerstroemia Natchez**, like other modern cultivars, has a naturally elegant, multi-stemmed form and does not require heavy pruning. In fact, over-pruning weakens the tree and spoils its natural architecture. The best approach is minimal pruning: remove only dead, crossing, or damaged branches in late winter or early spring. If you need to shape the tree or control size, do so lightly. The **United States National Arboretum**recommends allowing the tree to grow into its natural vase shape, which showcases both the flowers and the bark to best advantage.

Landscape Uses and Design Ideas

Specimen Planting

With its stunning summer blooms, handsome winter bark, and manageable ultimate size of 15 to 25 feet tall and wide, **Lagerstroemia Natchez**makes an outstanding specimen tree. Plant it as a focal point in a lawn, near an entryway, or at a corner of a patio where its beauty can be appreciated up close. The white flowers provide a cooling effect in the summer heat and pair beautifully with darker-foliaged plants.

Group Plantings and Alleys

Natchez crape myrtles are also effective when planted in groups of three or five, or even in a formal alley along a driveway or path. The uniformity of form and flower creates a sense of rhythm and structure in the landscape. Because they are resistant to disease, group plantings remain healthy and visually cohesive without the need for intensive spraying.

Combining with Other Plants

The soft white blooms of **Lagerstroemia Natchez**pair beautifully with a wide range of companion plants. Consider underplanting with lavender, Russian sage, ornamental grasses, or purple-leaved shrubs for striking color contrasts. In fall, the orange-red foliage of Natchez creates a stunning combination with the deep blues and purples of asters and salvias. The exfoliating bark also provides a beautiful backdrop for evergreen groundcovers and winter-blooming heathers.

Pest and Disease Resistance: A Breed Apart

The **United States National Arboretum** breeding program focused heavily on disease resistance, and it shows. **Lagerstroemia Natchez** is one of the most trouble-free crape myrtles you can grow. Its resistance to powdery mildew is inherited from its *Lagerstroemia fauriei*parent, and it is also less susceptible to leaf spot and sooty mold than many older varieties. Japanese beetles may occasionally feed on the leaves and flowers, but the damage is typically cosmetic and not life-threatening. Aphids can sometimes be a nuisance, especially on young, tender growth, but they are usually controlled by natural predators. In general, Natchez requires very little chemical intervention, making it an excellent choice for low-maintenance and sustainable landscapes.

The Legacy of the United States National Arboretum Breeding Program

The introduction of **Lagerstroemia Natchez** marked the beginning of a golden age for crape myrtle breeding. Following its success, the **United States National Arboretum** released a whole series of improved cultivars, including 'Tuscarora' (dark pink), 'Tuskegee' (light pink), 'Miami' (deep pink), 'Wichita' (lavender), and the popular 'Acoma' (white). All of these are hybrids between *Lagerstroemia indica* and *Lagerstroemia fauriei*, and they all carry the same genetic improvements in disease resistance and hardiness. The Natchez cultivar remains one of the most popular and widely planted of all these introductions, a testament to the vision and skill

United States National Arboretum continues to be a leader in woody plant breeding, but the Natchez crape myrtle is arguably its most famous and influential creation.

Conclusion: A Perfect Choice for the Modern Garden

In a world where gardeners increasingly demand plants that are both beautiful and resilient, **Lagerstroemia Natchez United States National Arboretum** stands as a shining example of what thoughtful plant breeding can achieve. It offers three seasons of outstanding ornamental interest—summer flowers, autumn foliage, and winter bark—combined with exceptional disease resistance and broad adaptability. Whether you are a seasoned horticulturist or a beginner planting your first tree, Natchez is a reliable and rewarding choice. Its enduring popularity is well deserved, and it continues to grace gardens, parks, and public spaces across the country. If you are looking for a tree that delivers beauty without constant maintenance, the Natchez crape myrtle is a perfect choice. Plant one, and you will understand why this introduction from the **United States National Arboretum** is considered a true American classic.

Related Articles

- **Are James Blunt And Emily Blunt Related**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/are-james-blunt-and-emily-blunt-related.pdf
- **Was Remember Me Based On A True Story**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/was-remember-me-based-on-a-true-story.pdf
- **Ess Employee Self Service Costco**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/ess-employee-self-service-costco.pdf
- **The Case For Christianity By Cs Lewis**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/the-case-for-christianity-by-cs-lewis.pdf

TOPIC INDEX

#lagerstroemia • #natchez • #united • #states • #national

DIGITAL EDITION

lagerstroemia-natchez-united-states-national-

DIGITAL EDITION

lagerstroemia-natchez-united-states-national-

DIGITAL EDITION

lagerstroemia-natchez-united-states-national-

DIGITAL EDITION

lagerstroemia-natchez-united-states-national-