

Crapemyrtle Flower Colors
Flower Color of Dynamite® and Red Rocket®
and Stimulating Height Growth

Carl Whitcomb, Lacebark Inc. Stillwater, OK

Factors that affect Flower Color.

1. Open a young flower bud on both Dynamite® or Red Rocket® and the petals inside are WHITE. The RED pigment is fixed in a very brief period after opening (perhaps as little as 10 to 15 minutes). If the flowers open on a cloudy morning, they will be a distinctly lighter color. Likewise, if the plants are loaded on a truck one day then delivered the next day to a customer the flowers that opened in the absence of light will be white or light pink. This is NOT a problem as the next flowers that open in full sun will be cherry red. Also, both Dynamite® and Red Rocket® will occasionally produce a flower(s) with some white on the outer portion of the petals. This is normal during cool or cloudy periods. Temperature at time of flower opening also plays a role in pigment intensity. I have noted that flowers on plants receiving cooling overhead irrigation during flower opening are slightly lighter than plants that are drip irrigated or planted in the field or landscape where no water contacts the flowers. Also, if your water applied by sprinkler irrigation is especially alkaline, flower color tends to be lighter.

2. By contrast, Siren Red® has blood red flowers, whether they open during sun or clouds, plus, if you open a bud, the petals are already dark red.

3. Because red flower pigment is fixed soon after bud opening, drought conditions will also tend to cause more white or pinkish flowers.

4. DO NOT use Diazanone insecticide on crapemyrtle. When I used Diazanone on partially rooted crapemyrtle cuttings and a few seedlings because they had a few aphids, some plants were killed, others dropped most of their leaves and all survivors grew poorly for a month or more.

5. Crapemyrtle flowers are EXTREMELY sensitive to any herbicide containing Roundup/ glyphosate weed killer. Roundup/ glyphosate drift so slight that there are no leaf symptoms at all, will discolor flowers on Dynamite® and Red Rocket® and many other seedlings under Oklahoma conditions. Dynamite® exposed to the slightest whiff of Roundup will produce flowers mostly white or pink for several weeks following, and then slowly the red colors will return. Crapemyrtle will absorb enough glyphosate herbicide from stem contact to affect flower color as well. This can happen at a low dose that will have no effect on the plants otherwise.

6. Burgundy Cotton® has superb wine new foliage and clear white flowers when it is hot. However, during cool periods, particularly early in early summer or late in the season, flowers may be light pink. This is strictly a temperature phenomenon with this cultivar and is independent of clouds or light intensity.

Stimulating height growth in field or landscape.

7. These cultivars of crapemyrtle were developed to flower and that they do well. When growing these plants in the field or landscape, fertilize heavily once in early spring just as new growth is beginning but after all chance of frost is past. To get height growth on these plants you must push them hard during the window between bud swell and flower bud initiation. Once flower buds are initiated, little growth in height will occur for the rest of the season as they were bred to bloom. This is also true for plants in containers, particularly large containers where fertility levels are typically lower than in one and three gallons.

8. Crapemyrtle flower on new growth, therefore the more they grow the more they flower. The only difference with the Whit Cultivars is that once flowering begins in the spring, all new growth quickly becomes blooms, even if you cut off the old flower heads.

For more information about crapemyrtle and other plants, visit www.lacebarkinc.com

