



# FS Commercial Landscape News

"We Keep The Grass Greener"

## Did you Know?

The cornerstone of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) is planting the right plant in the right place. This is vital, because over many generations plants adapt extremely well to one climate and develop a small natural range. A mature California live oak will eventually die if it gets summer water. Its leaves have a waxy coating that protects them from hot summers. It also has a worm that loves to chew on those leaves, and a poison that almost totally protects it from the worms, until a drought occurs that's so severe that even the oaks start suffering. The oak then drops its natural defenses and lets the worms defoliate the tree—removing its greatest source of water loss. When rains return, the oak starts growing new leaves and defends them from the worms.

The Monterey Pine is a coastal plant, adapted to grow in moist soil and cool summer temperatures. It depends on the fog for moisture, cooling, and sun protection. Monterey Pines are so beautiful that a lot of people plant them in warmer inland areas. The hot summers stress the trees, including those that are adequately watered, and within a few years they start running a temperature. This attracts a beetle whose sole niche in the ecology is to take out distressed trees to make room for healthier plants. Plants growing in a hostile environment are too stressed to defend themselves against diseases. They attract insect pests, and eventually die a slow death. This is why many homeowners spend their weekends watering, pruning, and spraying pesticides that kill the beneficial insects along with the pests. The homeowner's only natural defense against this situation is their intelligences and willingness to learn about the plants in their yard.

When selecting plants, look for a plant that's adapted to the place it will be planted. Choose a plant that likes your microclimate. Look up the ultimate size of the plant. A one-year old camellia that's two feet high may eventually grow to twenty feet high and as wide. Pick a plant that likes the sun exposure it will receive. Oregano grows like a weed if you plant it in the sun, but it will get leggy and susceptible to powdery mildew in the shade.

## Preferred IPM methods

- \* Plant pest-resistant or well-adapted plant varieties such as native plants
- \* Discourage pests by modifying the way you design, irrigate, fertilize, and manage your garden
- \* Alter the garden or home environment to deprive pests of the food, water, shelter, or other requirements they need to thrive
- \* Keep pests out of the home and garden using barriers, screens, and caulking
- \* Squash, trap, wash off, or prune out pests
- \* Rely on natural remedies in your garden to eat pests, thereby eliminating the need for insecticides that may end up in our waterways

- \* Pesticides should only be used when non-chemical controls are ineffective and pests are reaching intolerable levels; choose them carefully so that the least toxic, most effective material is used

## Natural Enemies

Most gardens contain far more types of natural enemies, or beneficial insects, than pest insects. Beneficial insects and other organisms that kill pest insects are called natural enemies. In any pest management or plant care program, it is important to encourage these natural enemies by avoiding pesticides that kill them. You can also encourage beneficial insects by choosing plants that provide them with pollen, nectar, and shelter and keeping ants out of pest infested plants. Learn to identify natural enemies, both in their adult forms and immature (larval) stages.

## Pruning a Crape Myrtle

Crape myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) are very popular landscape plants. They bloom prolifically in the hot summer months, have brilliant fall foliage and striking gray to cream winter bark. There appears to be some confusion about the correct way to prune crape myrtles. It has become common practice to behead them lopping off all the top branches. There is mistaken belief that this is necessary to promote flowering. In some areas this is called "crape murder". Flowers occur on the new growth produced in the spring, so light pruning in late winter encourages the production of flowering branches. If the trees are tipped back lightly right after the first flush of bloom, some cultivars are likely to bloom a second time. Cutting the trees back heavily can shock them and slow down the growth of flowering branches. If you don't prune at all, the flower clusters that emerge in the summer will be smaller but more prolific. If the trees are being pruned back severely to keep them small, consider replacing the one you have with a semi-dwarf cultivar. There are lots of new semi-dwarf cultivars available that will have a final height of 7-15'. A few of the smaller named cultivars are "Tonto" (red flowers), "Acoma" (white flowers), "Comanche" (light pink flowers), and "Zuni" (lavender flowers) - all resistant to powdery mildew when planted in full sun. Crape Myrtles must have full sun to bloom well. When you prune the plants in winter, remove crossing and damaged branches, and shoots that are headed into the middle of the tree. Be sure to cut just outside the branch collar, that swollen area just past the point where the branch attaches to the trunk. Don't coat the cuts with anything. The branches on the outside of the tree's canopy should be cut back only if needed, and not more than one-thirds of the length.

**FS Commercial Landscape, Inc**  
5151 Pedley Rd  
Riverside, CA. 92509  
951-360-7070 fax 951-360-7075  
[www.fslandscape.com](http://www.fslandscape.com)

G. John Wood  
President