

Crape Myrtles World Collection



"Ribbons and swaths of color." That's how Executive Director Susan Owens describes the effect of her foundation, The Crape Myrtle Trails of McKinney Foundation. The Trails began planting Crape Myrtles in McKinney in 1998. Ultimately, our city will be synonymous with these floriferous beauties and gardening devotees will flock to see the mid-summer coat of color.

A central hallmark of the Trails is the "The World Collection" Park, where 120 varieties of Crape Myrtles will be on display at Craig Ranch. This seven-acre park is owned by the city and is verified by the U.S. Arboretum as the only place in the world with such a diverse display of Crape Myrtles. The full design and architectural planning process was completed early this year, and Owens is buzzing with excitement about the plan.

"There are five crape myrtle colors," she says. "It's going to be divided into four color rooms while the borders are the fifth color. One corner will be red, one different hues of pink, one lavender, one purple, and they'll be divided by different varieties of white. The whites will make a cross that will go right through the middle of the park. It will have walking trails and is part of the bike trails in the city."

Lemuel Randolph, director of McKinney Parks, Recreation & Open Space, says the city is ready to move forward. "We expect to start up con-

struction in June or July," he reports. "Craig Ranch is moving up construction of an adjacent storm inlet for us, and we do all the earthwork preparation to be ready for fall planting. So, the Collection should be in place and ready for spring 2011."

This collection joins the other Crape Myrtle Trails throughout the city's medians, on public school grounds, and in various parks. The offi-

Left, photo by Neil Sperry and courtesy of the Crape Myrtle Trails.

cial efforts have put 75-80 varieties and nearly 10,000 Crape Myrtles in the most visible areas of the city. For a great view of trees that have matured and are showing their stuff, wait for a sunny day near the 3rd week of June, and then start your tour at El Dorado Parkway and Highway 5. The medians are glowing with the profusion of heat-defying blooms on Crape Myrtles all along the medians. You'll enjoy the color all the way down this central street, well into West McKinney.

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