

# Raunchy®

crapemyrtle

*Lagerstroemia indica*, 'Whit XI' cultivar. PPAF

A striking crapemyrtle that doesn't bloom!

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Crapemyrtle has been a widely used large shrub /small tree across the southern USA following introduction about 1750. Introductions from the National Arboretum resulted from breeding work by Dr. Don Egolf in 1966, gave interest in crapemyrtle a boost, as these were hybrids with *L. fauriei*. Hybrids solved the problem with powdery mildew, but, gave up the vibrant flower colors of true *L. indica*. In 1986, I began breeding work with *L. indica* using a different approach. This began to reveal features of the plant never seen before, such as cultivar 'Whit II', Dynamite® with true vibrant red flowers. The immediate success of cultivars Dynamite® and Red Rocket®, as one nurseryman described it, "lit a fire under interest in crapemyrtle". Subsequently, there are now perhaps as many as 100 new crapemyrtle cultivars on the market with minor variations. However, none provide the continuous production all season of sterile flowers like Double Feature®, Rhapsody in Pink® and Double Dynamite®.

Raunchy®, 'Whit XI' cultivar is the latest in our breeding program and without a doubt, the most unique

/ unusual. Raunchy® is sterile as it does not produce flowers. However, on the ends of new growth, are produced a network of structures that are highly modified panicle-like structures with highly modified sepals, creating the visual effect of flowers. Production of the highly modified sepal network are at first light purple, then as sepals age they shrivel and turn brown, but all the while, new sepals are produced keeping the overall visual color display constant. Late in the growing season, as production of replacement sepals slows or stops, the purple color darkens, finally the overall effect is the complex network of now brown sepals.

Emergence of the complex and unusual network of panicle-like structures is in early summer, about the same time as flowers on normal plants. Raunchy® remains attractive until a hard freeze, when the plant turns brown, with no fall color. Leaves begin with slight red-purple color soon changing to dark green and becoming leathery. The leaves are dense and dark green and highly resistant to both powdery mildew and *Cercospora* leaf spot.

Raunchy® is a slow grower, producing new growth 8 to 12 inches in length. Eventually, height may reach 6 feet with limited spread. Raunchy® is an eye catcher and "what is that" kind of landscape plant --- in short, amazing.

