

PLAY IT AGAIN®

The Landscape Advantage of Sterile – Reblooming Plants.
Carl Whitcomb PhD. Lacebark Inc.

The biological function of colorful flowers we enjoy is to attract insects for pollination. However, as soon as pollination is complete and ovaries begin to expand into developing seeds, the showy flower petals go from being an essential asset, to a water losing liability. Developing seeds cause hormones to be produced to cause flower petals to drop. Seed production consumes large quantities of energy from the overall plant system. For example, Natchez crapemyrtle produces huge numbers of white flowers in early July, and then spends much of the rest of the summer maturing the massive seed load.

A plant that does not produce seeds spends energy extending the roots system and providing support for additional flowers and other plant functions. Sterile flowers remain showy much longer since no seeds or hormones are produced. And, since most seeds are unwanted and either unattractive or create some landscape mess, sterile plants are cleaner and neater.

At Lacebark Research Farm we have focused for 25 years on reduced seed production or even better, sterile plants in order to maximize and extend color in the landscape. We have made dramatic progress in this area with a number of species, but especially crapemyrtle. Lacebark has patented and trademarked two introductions unlike any others on the market; if you liked the first flower show, these plants will Play it Again® and again, and again all season long. With the Play it Again® repeat blooming feature, the cost per day of color is among the lowest for all landscape plants.

*** Rhapsody in Pink®, cultivar ‘Whit VIII’, (plant patent #16,616) is the anchor of the Play it Again® team. It is both sterile and reblooms over and over on the same panicle. By the time flowers age and finally drop on the first panicle produced in early summer, flowers on a second panicle are in full color show. By the time flowers on a second panicle age and drop, the first panicle is again covered in flower buds or flowers. The result is a show of soft pink flowers in the landscape beginning in late June and continuing to near frost in the fall. In North-Central Oklahoma, this means 110 to 120 days of flowers. There is no roller coaster ride of blooms, then lull, then blooms and no seed capsules. A Rhapsody in Pink® plant with 10 or 12 panicles or more creates a spectacular landscape show all season.

*** Double Feature®, cultivar ‘Whit IX’, (ppaf) is the latest addition to the Lacebark stable of colorful, sterile and reblooming Play it Again® crapemyrtle. Double Feature® is a semi-dwarf and grows naturally as a round ball. Flowers are ruby red in small individual panicles, but each plant is covered with great numbers of panicles. The flowering and reblooming is the same as with Rhapsody in Pink® and without seed capsules. New growth is deep wine-red, and slowly changes to dark green, and with no mildew or leafspot. Double Feature® is anticipated to reach only about 8 feet at maturity with a 7 to 8 foot spread or with modest pruning, plants can be maintained smaller.

Watch for additional plants in our expanding Play It Again® series of sterile-reblooming plants at www.lacebarkinc.com or contact us at Sales@Lacebarkinc.com