

## *PASTORAL GARDEN REPORT -- AUGUST 14, 2005*

The biggest "show-offs" of the Pastoral Garden at this time of the year - summer's end - are the *Lagerstoemia* (aka, crape myrtle) and *Vitex agnus-castus* (aka, chaste tree). The former is widely planted in gardens, patios and as street plantings - medians and curbside. (See: El Camino Real in Menlo Park, Mountain View and Los Altos.) They bloom beautifully through the heat of summer into fall and require relatively little care or water. The color range runs from bright red to delicate pink and lovely lavenders. There are alba (white) varieties also on the market. These plants are warmth loving - thriving in Oklahoma and Texas - but will survive severe temperature drops of the coldest winters. At present the Pastoral Garden has six crape myrtles, all of which are doing very well. Mildew is a problem with the older varieties of *Lagerstoemia* but can be easily handled with a fungicide as used for roses. Newer varieties have been bred to resist this disease.

It seems odd to me how very few *Vitex agnus-castus* plants are seen growing and blooming in our area. This plant seems ideal for any patio or yard for our homes. It grows very well in our soil and climate; is almost pest free; blooms beautifully in the mid-to-late summer season; can be trained to a small shade tree structure; and is resistant to oak root fungus. What more could you ask of a plant?

It is deciduous, shows little, if any, fall coloration, but has a wonderful upright structure which can be pruned to taste and need. All of the lovely flowering is done on new growth and has a very mild, pleasant scent. Of all my recommendations for your gardens through these years of writing, this plant takes top billing. As we say to Mikey - "Try it, you'll like it!"

While clearing up some of the dried vegetation around the perennial beds, it was quiet, other than what noise my motions caused, - except, I kept hearing a sharp "snap" every once in a while. Curiosity led me to investigate and find the source. Nature at work again! The *alstroemeria* flower heads had set seed pods which now were mature and desiccated enough to "snap" open, flinging their seeds about the beds. I knew they opened to release seed but never realized they did it with such vigor as to make noise. California poppy seed pods also snap open throwing their seeds all over - but they do it ever more quietly.

At the Pastoral Garden the iris-give-away is in full swing and will continue through September (at least). Come and get some!! And the latest news: A sprinkler system is being installed for the Pastoral Garden as I write this report. When it will be completed is still unknown. The mills of the gods...etc., etc.

*Arlen*