**Q’s & A’s**

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Q: How do you control dodder? It is growing on our wildflowers and plants alongside our driveway. We have tried pulling the parasite off the plants but it always returns and spreads.

A: It is not easy to control dodder. I have not experienced it myself but the prescribed way to control it is to spray it and its host plants generously with Round-up. It is essential that the host plants be destroyed along with the dodder or it will just return.

Q: What are the petunias with the heat tolerance that will survive the summer and perk up in the autumn?

A: In my experience, VIP, Laura Bush and Wave series petunias are most likely to survive the summer. If the summer is very hot, however, it is unlikely any will survive. Laura Bush will often naturalize and return by seed.

Q: My tomatoes look terrible. The spider mites moved in and ruined them before I could take action. My inclination is to pull them up and try again in the fall. What do you think?

A: I agree with you. Once they reach the stage of widespread discolored leaves and webs, it is a lost cause. Unless your compost pile is over 50 yards from the garden, place the infested plants in garbage bags and have them hauled to the landfill.

Q: So what is the verdict? Will we have another big acorn year?

A: I don’t think the crop will be as large as last year. It is tough for trees to have 2 large acorn or nut crops in consecutive years. Bad news for the squirrels, birds, and deer. Expect the squirrels to look for the acorns they buried last year and for alternate food sources such as the fruits and nuts in your landscape.

Q: I like the look of my St. Augustine grass mowed at 2 inches, what is the advantage at mowing at 3 inches.

A: St. Augustine grass mowed at 3 inches has a deeper root system than grass mowed at two inches. The deeper the root system, the more drought tolerant the grass is. It usually takes more irrigation water to keep 2-inch St. Augustine green and healthy.

For questions about horticulture, water conservation and the environment, email Calvin Finch at Calvin.finch@tamu.edu.