**Nurseryman Q’s & A’s**

By Calvin R. Finch, Ph.D., Horticulturist and Director

Texas A&M Water Conservation and Technology Center

Q: My nurseryman recommended against planting Bermuda grass seed now because it is too cold to germinate and develop. Surely that is incorrect. Is has been over 80oF every day.

A: I agree with your nurseryman. Bermuda grass requires hot weather to germinate and to grow. It is cool at night in the fall, and even if it germinates, it will be susceptible to freeze damage unless it has a growing and hardening off period. Wait until May 1 to plant Bermuda grass by seed.

Q: What is that disease that is killing oaks and other trees because of the drought? You talked about it on the Gardening South Texas radio show a few weeks ago. The bark sloughs off and a black or brown smooth area shows up under to bark. Is there any prevention or cure?

A: The disease is hypoxylon. The spores are everywhere and develop in stressed trees. Once a tree has the disease and the symptoms appear, it is doomed. The main prevention is to provide growing trees adequate water.

Q: What are our options for winter color in the flower garden?

A: In the shade, consider growing cyclamen and primula. In the sun, you have a large choice. Pansies, snapdragons, petunias, dianthus, stocks and calendulas all do well. Protect the low-growing plants, such as pansies and primula, with slug and snail bait.

Q: My tomatoes are tennis-ball sized and still very green. How much more time will they need before the first freeze to reach full size and color?

A: I think that three weeks will do it. You can also protect them from the first freeze and give them some extra time. Check out the “planket” freeze-protection product at the nursery, or have your blankets and agricultural fiber (Insulate and others) on hand. If the forecast calls for temperatures under 28oF, provide a heat source—holiday lights or a mechanic’s light work well.