**Hummingbirds**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Director and Horticulturist**

**Texas A&M Water Conservation and Technology Center**

The migrating ruby-throat hummingbirds have come and gone, and the resident black- chinned hummingbirds will soon settle into their breeding territories if they haven’t already.

For a short time you may only have the nesting birds in and around your landscape visiting your sugar water feeders. Later in the summer the young of the year will find the feeders.

In addition to the sugar water feeders, the resident black-chinned hummingbirds will gather nectar from blooming plants on your patio and garden. Among their favorites are zinnias, butterfly vine, Salvia gregii (autumn sage), lantanas, esperanza, the blue summer sages and firebush.

Pentas, zinnias and firebush are especially suitable for the patio.

Pentas will bloom in sun or shade. They are available with red, white, pink or lavender blooms. The flowers are small and tubular but are arranged in large clusters. Penta is a hot weather annual.

Firebush also has a small tubular flower. As the name indicates it has a red bloom. The new growth on firebush is also red and the plant often has good fall color. Firebush is a perennial that will return each summer to form a 2-foot diameter globe if planted in a 3-5 gallon container. Plant firebush in full sun.

The large zinnias are very showy in a container such as a half whiskey barrel, but there are also versions such as “Lilliput” that can be planted in smaller containers. Plant zinnias in full sun.

**Garden Tasks**

It is time to harvest and/or discard the remaining winter vegetables including carrots, beets, rutabagas, lettuce, chard and Brussels sprouts. They will decline quickly in the heat.

Okra, peppers and southern peas can still be planted for summer harvest.

Rinse the hummingbird feeder and refill it with sugar water every week. Use a bottle brush for a more thorough cleaning every month.

Irrigation systems become very important for the lawn from now through summer. Make sure that your system has a thorough maintenance visit by your irrigation contractor.