**Q&A**

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Q: We are overrun by mosquitoes. Tell us what to do or spray to reduce the population.

A: The most important thing is to dump out any pails, hubcaps, unused dog dishes, and any other water holding container. The mosquitoes breed in the sitting water. You can also spray an insecticide into lush plants and thickets by your patios, swing set or swimming pool. Malathion and pyrethrum (organic) are the old reliables. Spinosad is another organic control that may help. Check the label before you use them.

Q: We have a number of oriental hibiscus plants in containers. The red and pinks are blooming fine but the yellow and orange do not have as many flowers. Is there some extra fertilization that will help them bloom more?

A: I am afraid not. It sounds like you are fertilizing them on a regular basis with hibiscus food and soluble fertilizer. As long as all of them are in full sun they are probably blooming at their full potential. As attractive and interesting as the orange and yellow hibiscus are, they do not bloom as much as pink or red under the same conditions.

Q: What is the red salvia growing in the shade all over my neighborhood? The deer don’t seem to eat it and it is a favorite of the hummingbirds.

A: The plant you are describing sounds like Salvia coccinea. It is an annual reseeding Salvia that has shade tolerance. Collect and spread the seed in your yard. Some years it blooms mostly in the autumn but this year it is everywhere. It is also called tropical salvia.

Q: I just want to check before I pull my spring planted tomatoes. We should replant in August for the fall, right?

A: That is my recommendation. July is not a good tomato plant month unless you like spider mites and fungal diseases. Pick any full size fruit that remains and allow it to ripen in the house.

Q: What are the lavender wildflowers that bloom on tall stalks about 3 feet tall? They are very attractive.

A: It is called bee balm. Mexican hat (yellow petals and raised center) and firewheel (flat red/rust, silver dollar size bloom) are also still making a show on some sites.

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