**Calvin Finch PhD**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

**Q&A**

Q: Will all the cold weather mean that there will be fewer insects this spring and summer?

A: Some insect populations will be reduced due to the cold weather. Unfortunately, beneficial insects may be more susceptible to cold than fast reproducers like aphids. It is hard to predict which populations will be reduced by one cold winter.

Q: What happens when you plant both maroon and blue bluebonnet transplants in a field? My brother says that the whole field will end up being one color.

A: Your brother would have been even more correct if he had said that the field would end up all blue. Blue is the dominant bluebonnet color. All bluebonnets have genetic material for blue in their make-up, so as the genetic material is mixed and recombined, the maroon will be overcome by the blue.

Q: When should we fertilize our citrus? How about peaches and plums?

A: March is a good time to fertilize the citrus and the stone fruits. If they are growing in the ground, apply 1 cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 1 inch of trunk diameter to the root area. If the citrus is in a container, use a container fertilizer such as Osmocote.

Q: We applied a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent sand burs from growing in our lawn. Can we also go ahead and fertilize the lawn?

A: Wait to fertilize the lawn until you have mowed real grass twice. The usual timing is about May 1. At that point, the grass has enough roots to pick up the nutrients and enough green foliage to us the nutrients. If you fertilize too early, the nitrogen is wasted, unless the weeds use it.

Q: Where we used to live, horticulturists discouraged us from using oak leaves for mulch because they were full of tannic acid. How come we don’t have that rule here?

A: Most areas no longer advise against use of oak leaves for mulch. They are especially valuable here because organic material decomposes and disappears so quickly in our mild temperatures.

We also have alkaline soil that benefits from any acidic or neutral material.

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