**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

**“Q&A”**

Q: How much seaweed extract should I use to fight off spider mites in my tomatoes?

A: If the label does not say, try 2 tablespoons per 1 gallon of water. Spray in the evening or the early morning to reduce the chance of foliage burn. The reason I say that the seaweed extract label may not refer to a dilution formula is that quite often it is considered a fertilizer rather than a miticide.

Another option is to spray neem oil on the underside of the leaves every week. It also seems to have some power to reduce spider mite population growth.

Q: What are good Texas native plants for spring color?

A: In “12 months of nature plant color,” the Bexar County Master Gardeners and I list Texas mountain laurel, cross vine, Texas gold columbines, redbud, cherry sage and Mexican olive as the plants to provide color in March and April. Mexican olive won’t do much blooming this spring, however, because most were defoliated in the winter cold.

Q: The Bermuda grass has already begun to sprout in my flower garden. Is there an herbicide that will work to control it without hurting my flowers?

A: Yes, the contact herbicide specific for grasses will kill Bermuda grass without hurting flowers, shrubs or broadleaf perennials. There are many options including Vantage, Over the Top, and Grass be Gone.

Q: Our peaches are doing well. What do I spray on them to reduce insect and disease damage?

A: The traditional sprays are Sevin for insects and Captan for disease. They are available separately or in combinations called Fruit Tree Spray. Organic gardeners can try pyrethrin, neem oil, and/or sulfur. There are also combination organic sprays for fruit. It is important to spray every week.

Q: How high should I mow my zoysia grass? Do I need to mow it every week?

A: Mow your zoysia at 2 inches tall with a reel mower or sharp rotary mower. It is important to mow every week to avoid the wounds that appear when it is mowed less frequently.

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