**Q’s & A’s**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q: We just moved from Arizona and are surprised that so few of our new neighbors use graywater from their shower and clothes washing machine to irrigate their landscape. Why isn’t it used more here?

A: Graywater is used by some gardeners but should be used by more. We need to do a better job of educating area gardeners that graywater is safe and easy to use. I understand that as much as 10 percent of landscape watering in Arizona is provided by graywater. Texas A&M engineers here in my office are preparing a pamphlet on how to retrofit the house for graywater use. It costs less than $400 to do so.

Q: Is it a problem that the bees visit my hummingbird feeders and drive off the birds?

A: Hopefully, their visits cover only part of the day so that the hummingbirds can get their share. Some hummingbird feeders have bee guards but usually the attention from bees is a part-time and temporary issue. Adding another feeder usually helps.

Q: What are square-shaped bugs visiting my tomatoes? It looks like they are damaging the fruit.

A: The insects are stink bugs. They inject their digestive juices into the tomato and then suck out the resultant stew. The wounds form scar tissue and disfigure the fruit but it can still be eaten. Stink bugs are tough to control. Sevin or Malathion will kill them.

Q: Tell me about a wick applicator for Round-up application. Do they work?

A: Yes, wick applicators work very well for Round-up (glyphosate) and other contact herbicides. You touch the weeds you want killed with the wick. Very little herbicide is used and there is no drift or accidental applications that can happen with sprayers.

Q: We are using ornamental sweet potato plants for a groundcover. It is great, attractive and fills in the area. Can we use the sweet potatoes that are produced for food?

A: Yes, they are edible. I leave mine in place to serve a start for next year’s plants.

Q: What insecticide works to control lace bugs on lantana? We want to prevent the damage they caused last year.

A: Acephate works well (also called Orthene). I would guess that spinosad may also work if you apply it once every two weeks for the next six weeks.

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