**Q&A**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q: Why do you recommend that we mow our St. Augustine so tall? I think it looks better when it is mowed low.

A: St. Augustine is attractive mowed low as long as there is plenty of rain but the root system mimics the crown so it is reduced to match the top. When the rains quit and it becomes hot, there is a reduced root system and reduced drought tolerance. Tall St. Augustine is much more attractive than dead St. Augustine.

Q: My tomatoes have a few large green fruit left but they are looking ratty. Is it worthwhile to leave them in place? Will they perk up in the fall?

A: Now is a good time to harvest the remaining fruit and let it ripen in the house. Pull the plants so the tomato ground can be fallow until you plant tomatoes for the autumn in August. Pulling spent plants now reduces the reproduction of spider mites and tomato fungi that will infect the next planting.

Q: If we had grubs in our lawn last year, is now the time to apply a soil insecticide?

A: Yes, as quickly as possible. The grubs will reach full size soon and quit feeding. If they aren’t feeding, the insecticide won’t kill them. If you wait any longer, the damage will be evident but the insecticide will be too late to kill the grubs. The same soil insecticide works for chinch bugs as well.

Q: My zinnias are already showing powdery mildew. Should I pull them and replant?

A: Stick with the current plants until they quit blooming and look unattractive. I am thinking they may hang on another month because the humidity is dropping.

Q: What is the best fertilizer for bougainvillea?

A: Osmocote and similar slow release fertilizers for containers are the old standbys but granular hibiscus food and soluble fertilizers also work.

Q: What causes the black scar tissue on citrus? Is it a fungus?

A: No, the problem is caused by grackles that peck on the immature fruit. They make the fruit unattractive but it can still be eaten. Some gardeners try to cover the tree with bird netting. Another tactic is to hang computer discs. They spin and may scare off some birds. I usually am content to tolerate the damage.

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