**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q: When can we divide our iris rhizomes? I remember the old adage to divide perennials that bloom in the spring in the fall and to divide fall bloomers in the spring.

A: November is often described as the best month to divide the spring bloomers such as iris, Shasta daisy, Fanick’s phlox, German carnations and even daylilies. It will work anytime now through December.

Q: Should our tomatoes be setting fruit now? They look good but aren’t setting any fruit.

A: It needs to cool down for the plants to set fruit. Expect increased growth of regular-sized leaves to begin about five days after nighttime temperatures fall to 72 degrees. A week later the fruit will start setting. One hundred degrees in the day and 78 degrees at night is too much for tomatoes to perform well, but they recover quickly.

Q: We have a bur oak. The acorns are huge. Can we plant them?

A: Yes, you can plant them in the ground or in a container. To increase the chance that the seed will germinate, you should only plant acorns that sink when you put them in a pail of water. The acorns that float have been damaged by weevils.

Q: Why isn’t buffalo grass promoted more as a lawn grass in the area? We like the looks of it, and they say it doesn’t use much water.

A: Buffalo grass is a native grass that has a very large range across North America. One of the reasons that it is so drought tolerant is that it doesn’t form a tight sod. Each buffalo grass plant needs its own space. Unfortunately that space between plants is an open invitation for weeds to fill the space. To keep the weeds out of buffalo grass, you have to either become skillful with herbicides or grow it like groundcover, 5 or 6 inches tall. The main weed is Bermuda grass. Buffalo grass also requires full sun. It can’t be used in shade. The plant is also sensitive to wet winters and can decline quickly if the soil is soggy.

Q: What is the vine that has purple flowers and is the favorite caterpillar food source?

A: Sounds like passion vine. It is the favorite food source of gulf fritillary caterpillars.

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