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**“Q&A”**

Q: What is the best pre-emergent herbicide to use to prevent sand burs and when should I apply it?

A: Amaze and XL are two excellent products for that purpose. Apply one of them at the end of February or early in March, and then again in late May.

Q: You talk about using suet to attract insect-eating birds. In the old days, we used chunks of beef fat for the purpose. Is that as effective as the expensive blocks sold at the feed stores?

A: Birds like both. The blocks at the feed store have seed and/or fruit added so that they also attract seed- and fruit-eating birds.

The most serious insect eaters are starlings, wrens, woodpeckers, warblers, mockingbirds and kinglets.

Q: Are the “hybrid” live oaks better than the regular live oaks?

A: All live oaks are technically hybrids. They are grown from seed with two parents’ genes and not vegetatively reproduced.

The trees advertised as “hybrids” were grown from the seed of a parent tree that was identified as fast growing and more upright. If you want those characteristics, select a tree marketed as a “hybrid.”

Q: When should we plant tomato seed so we can transplant the seedlings into the garden at the right time?

A: Allow for six weeks to grow transplants from seed. If your target is April 1 for planting, that would mean plant the seed on Feb. 15.

Q: When can I replace my winter-blooming annuals with the summer flowers?

A: Plant zinnias, begonias, coleus and other hot-weather bloomers in late March through June.

Q: Is it too early to aerate and top dress the lawn?

A: No, now is the best time. Rent an aerator that cuts plugs from the lawn and lays them out on the surface. Follow up by spreading one-half inch of compost. The channel opens up the soil to oxygen, water and nutrients as well as the compost.

Use compost rather than a sand/compost mix. Sand is filler. Compost is the active ingredient.

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