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**“Q&A”**

Q: Is it too late to plant tomatoes? How about peppers?

A: It is relatively late for tomatoes. If you can find some large transplants, they may be able to produce a crop before it gets too hot in July. Peppers are more heat tolerant and should do fine.

Q: We are going to trim our shade trees so more sun reaches our lawn. We know you need to paint the pruning cuts on oaks to prevent oak wilt. We also have cedar elms and Mexican sycamores; do they need to be painted as well?

A: Live oak and red oak, Spanish and Texas varieties, need to be painted but not white oaks such as bur, chinkapin or Lacey oak. Your sycamores and cedar elms don’t need to be painted.

Q: Can we still fertilize the lawn? It is just now starting to grow well.

A: Yes, the whole month of May is a good time to fertilize the lawn. Use a slow-release manufactured fertilizer such as 19-5-9 or an organic fertilizer.

Q: What are some perennial shrubs that we can plant in the shade?

A: Shade-tolerant groundcovers include monkey grass, liriope, Asiatic jasmine and dwarf ruellia. Perennials include Texas gold columbines, Turks cap, shrimp plant and blue plumbago. For shrubs, consider viburnum tinus, viburnum sandankwa, standard pittosporum, dwarf Chinese holly and compact nandina. For small trees, use Mexican redbud or loquat.

Q: Is drip irrigation an option for the lawn? We have seen it advertised as being more efficient than sprinkler irrigation. One article said that they bury it to provide water for the lawn.

A: Unfortunately drip irrigation has not been proven to be practical for lawn irrigation in our soils. In some loamy soils, it may work okay if you are willing to pay the expensive installation costs and properly maintain it.

Perhaps the technologies will advance where it can be effectively used in the future for lawn irrigation in our area.

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