**Written By: Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

**“Q&A”**

**Q:** Our irrigation contractor was not very encouraging when we suggested that we wanted to replace sprinkler zones with drip irrigation. He said it is not as efficient as people say and it is hard to maintain. What do you say?

**A:** I say, “Get a new irrigation contractor.” The answer you were given is the answer that unskilled contractors with drip irrigation used to say. Drip irrigation is much more efficient than sprinkler irrigation, and a well-constructed drip system is simpler to maintain then a sprinkler system. The good news is that most irrigation contractors can work with both systems now.

**Q:** Tell us again what were the mid-day onion varieties that we can plant now and still raise some decent onions.

**A:** Plant candy (yellow), red candy apple (red) or superstar (white) as quickly as possible.

**Q:** My nursery has Dreamland zinnias. Are they a good variety to plant? Can we plant them now?

**A**: Yes, Dreamland is a good variety with colorful, large rounded blooms. The plants resist powdery mildew the best of any varieties I have grown in this area. Plant them now through September.

**Q:** Is a Lacey oak a good shade tree? They look attractive in the nursery.

**A:** They make a small (30 feet), drought-tolerant shade tree. The leaves are silvery and attractive; however, they are not a fast growing tree.

**Q:** We blundered and already fertilized our lawn. Is it a major blunder? What will happen?

**A:** Early lawn fertilization results in wasted nitrogen because the lawn grass is not capable of using the nutrients until the roots and top are growing actively. Wait until you have mowed real grass twice to fertilize. If you used slow-release lawn fertilizer, at least half of the nitrogen will still be available to the lawn later in the spring and summer.

For questions about horticulture, water conservation and the environment, email Calvin Finch at [Calvin.finch@tamu.edu](mailto:Calvin.finch@tamu.edu)