**Q’s & A’s**

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**Q:** Is it possible that American goldfinches are changing color into their breeding plumage? We have lesser goldfinches too, but these are bigger birds with a different gold and black pattern.

**A:** Yes, we are also seeing some breeding plumage at our feeder. The American goldfinches will start going north to their breeding grounds sometime in May.

**Q:** Tell us again how we know it is time to harvest our root crops.

**A:** For most root crops, harvest them when the size is large enough to use. This is especially true for carrots, beets, radishes, rutabagas and turnips. They all should be used before we reach summer. Potatoes can be harvested when the plants bloom or can stay in the ground until after the tops die if you can’t use them earlier. You can use onions as you need them, the bulbs will quit growing when the tops flop over.

**Q:** What is happening to my lawn? Could it be brown spot this time of year or take all? Grubs or chinch bugs? I did not think that grubs would be a problem this time of the year and I have checked for Cinch bugs. The damage is not circular in shape. Do you have any ideas what the problem might be. The grass seems to dry out and die and new grass fills in.

**A:** I believe your issue is that the winter annual grasses are dying out because of the heat. The permanent lawn grasses are filling in. There is no need for action.

**Q:** I purchased both Southern Weed and Feed (29-1-10) and Bonus S, since they were highly promoted. However, they both indicate the use of approximately 35 pounds of fertilizer per 10,000 square feet, which is nearly triple of what you have recommended. Are they just trying to sell more products? Since I have already used their product and spread it according to their directions, have I placed too much nitrogen into the soil? If so, what harm have I done? The next time I fertilize should I use a more balanced product (15-5-9) like you suggested. Whatever suggestions you have will be greatly appreciated. I work extremely hard on my yard and could use some professional (unbiased) help.

**A:** A&M recommends 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. Using Bonus S with its 29 percent of a nitrogen source would be 3 pounds of fertilizer for 1,000 square feet so the 35 pounds per 10,000 square feet is correct. Bonus S is a good product. Phosphorus (the middle number) is not an essential additive for our soil because we have lots of P in the soil. The P, however, becomes more important if you fertilize plants in raised beds because P is not as available in commercial landscape mixes as it is in native soils in our area.

 We don’t recommend the use of Weed and Feed because the time to fertilize (October and May) is different from the time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide (August and February). We also use slow release lawn fertilizer for vegetables, flowers, trees and shrubs. The herbicide is not compatible for that use.

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