**WEB**

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**“Mulberry Q&A”**

Q. What do you think about mulberry trees? Are they good shade trees? Do they grow fast? Can you harvest the fruit?

A. Mulberries are not considered high quality shade trees. The wood is soft and there is considerable branch breakage. Mulberries do grow very fast. They are a wonderful food source for wildlife. The berries are produced in March or April. You can harvest the fruit if you can beat the birds to it. Mockingbirds, doves, cardinals and many other species begin feeding on the fruit before it even ripens.

One of the biggest problems with mulberries is that the birds spread the seed everywhere in the neighborhood near the tree. You end up with mulberries everywhere.

Q. Is the soil warm enough now to plant our potted up tomato transplants? They are getting large.

A. April 1 is usually the “magic day.” If you have some transplants that are smaller than the rest, save them. Sometimes we get a cool spell in early April.

Q. Can the ball moss go into the compost pile along with the live oak leaves? It is falling off of the trees.

A. Yes, both materials are suitable for the compost pile.

Q. Remind me where we should fertilize the lawn. We want it to green up as quickly as possible.

A. Spring green-up is more dependent on spring weather and last fall’s fertilizer than the fertilizer you apply this spring. Apply your spring fertilization after you have mowed real lawn grass, not weeds, two times. It may be as late as May 1.

 Use a slow-release lawn fertilizer, such as 19-5-9. If you fertilize early, the weeds benefit more than the lawn.

Q. When can we plant zinnias and the other warm weather annuals?

A. Zinnias, cosmos, moss roses, begonias, purslane, caladiums, pentas and coleus can be planted now. I usually wait for another month until the snapdragons, stocks, pansies, cyclamen and primrose decline from the heat.

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