**Q’s & A’s**

**Calvin Finch, PhD**

**Director, Water Conservation and Technology Center**

Q: I am ready for my lawn to green up. When can I fertilize?

A: With our warm weather grasses, there is no advantage in fertilizing before April 15. Weeds can use the extra nutrients but not the grass. Fertilize the lawn in the spring after you have mowed real grass (not weeds) twice.

Q: We like roses but do not want to have to be a slave to pruning and spraying. Is it true that some of the new roses bloom without tender loving care?

A: Yes, some of the modern roses and many of the old-fashioned roses are tough enough to prosper and bloom without pruning and pesticide sprays. They can even survive without irrigation, but they bloom better with some supplemental watering if it has been more than two weeks from the last rain. Check out Belinda’s Dream (pink), Carefree Beauty (also called Katy Road, pink), Knockout (red or pink), Martha Gonzales (red), Grandma’s Yellow (yellow), Butterfly (pink) and Mrs. Dudley Cross (cream).

Q: Our live oak trees are plagued with ball moss. Despite what is said about it being harmless, I think it is killing branches. Can I remove it?

A: Ball moss is not a parasite and in fact is harmless. It grows on branches that are not growing where there is limited air movement. The branches are declining because of shading or other causes. Ball moss will even grow on utility lines or fence wires.

If it is important to do so to you, you can kill it with copper hydroxide applied by a sprayer in February. For best results confer with a tree maintenance company.

Q: How important is it to remove my spider mite-infested tomato plants from the garden? My neighbor says they should be put in a garbage sack and hauled away rather than be put in the compost if we don’t want to be re-infested.

A: You neighbor has the story correct. Composting is okay if the pile is active (hot) and/or several hundred feet away from the garden. Spider mites are tough and persistent.