**Q&A**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q: My lettuce seeds did not germinate. I covered them with soil. Is there time to replant?

A: Yes, you can still plant lettuce. Prepare the soil and then apply the seed to the soil surface. Do not cover the seed. Water with a wand at least once per day until the seeds germinate.

Q: Our neighbor gave us some iris rhizomes. They have been stored in a sack for over a year and look dried out. She says that they will still grow. Is she right?

A: Yes, iris rhizome can tolerate a storage period. Plant iris so the top of the rhizome is even with the soil surface. They do not last long if they are buried. Iris is also one of the few plants that do better without mulch. Plant them in full sun with about 1 foot between plants.

Q: Our St. Augustine lawn looks terrible. Can I plant rye seed now so the lawn is beautiful? Will it hurt the St. Augustine grass?

A: Over seeding does not work for St. Augustine, zoysia or buffalo grass. Bermuda grass is the only lawn variety that survives over seeding with limited stress. Fertilize your St. Augustine now and control the weeds by mowing this winter so it can recover next spring.

Q: How much should we fertilize our spinach and other greens in the winter garden? How about snapdragons and stocks in the flower garden?

A: Every three weeks, side dress each 8-foot row with a cup of slow release or winterizer lawn fertilizer for the greens and other vegetables. The flowers can produce with slightly less fertilizer but it is important that all winter growing plants receive some fertilizer.

Q: Can we aerate and top dress our lawn now? We will be out of town in February and think the lawn needs it.

A: Yes, February is usually thought of as being ideal but top dressing and aeration will work now.

Q. What are the trees that we can use as a holiday tree and then plant it in the landscape after the holidays?

A. Consider Aleppo pine, deodora cedar, Italian stone pine, Japanese black pine or Arizona cypress. “Blue Point” juniper also does well but it only grows to 7 feet tall.

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