**Q’s & A’s**

**By Calvin R. Finch, Ph.D., Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q: The pecan flowers are a mess. What is the best way to deal with them?

A: They are full of nitrogen and moisture so expect them to decompose quickly. Sweep up the portion that drops on the driveway and put them in the compost pile.

Q: My cyclamen have declined already. They were so expensive, is there any way to keep them alive until next winter?

A: The best way to keep them alive and blooming is to put them in an east facing window in an air conditioned house. If you use 40 to 50 like I do that is not practical.

Cyclamen will often live through the summer if it is left in a container and placed in a shady situation. Unfortunately, they decline and do not become ready to bloom until mid-winter, if at all. I have become resigned to buying new plants each year.

Q: Is there any way to protect apples and pears from squirrels?

A: The only way I have found is to trap the offending squirrel. It seems that there are some individuals that persist in the practice.

Q: Is it too late to plant a shade tree? We had a busy fall and didn’t get it done.

A: Shade trees can be planted all year in Central and South Texas if you have access to healthy container-grown stock. Fall and winter are the best times to plant in terms of survival rate but success will be high now if you keep the tree watered and mulch over the root system.

Q: Why doesn’t anyone grow peonies here? I just returned from Michigan and while perusing the photo album was reminded of how beautiful and bountiful the peonies are every spring.

A: The summer is too hot for most peonies in our area. There are a few heirloom selections that will survive if they are planted in good soil in morning sun. *[Note: do an internet search for heat tolerant Paeonia species]*

Q: What can we plant in the vegetable garden now?

A: Peppers, okra, southern peas, and even tomatoes, if you find a large plant.

Calvin.finch@tamu.edu