**Q&A**

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Q: When should we prune our roses for the fall?

A: I believe anytime in August or early September. Cut out dead wood and open the middles. It is also a good time to apply a cup of slow release lawn fertilizer and to resume your irrigation and spray program.

Q: How long will the pentas last? We just love the blooms and the butterflies they attract. Do they have any pests or diseases?
A: Pentas last until Thanksgiving. Pentas are generally pest and disease free except for the tomato hornworms. A hornworm can strip a penta of foliage in two or three days. Watch for them.

Q: When do we move out of the “hottest part of the summer” as far as pruning live oaks go? We want to wait as long as possible without putting our trees at risk of oak wilt from pruning.

A: August is still considered the hot part of the summer. Check with your community. Many Central Texas cities have ordinances that list acceptable times to prune oak trees.

Q: Is there any way to discourage the wasps and bees from using our hummingbird feeders? They seem to drive off the birds.

A: Bees and wasps usually use the feeders for short periods each day and the hummingbirds use them the rest of the day. You can also look for feeders that have the most effective bee guards. My Best A-1 feeder, manufactured in Poteet, seem to do a good job of discouraging the bees.

Q: Is it worthwhile for us to fertilize the lawn again now? Up north where we lived before, it seems like we fertilized more often than people do here.

A: The Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service recommends that we fertilize home lawns in the spring about May 1 and then again in the fall about October 1. With hot temperatures and low availability of water in midsummer, the fertilizer would largely be wasted.

Q: When is the last day to plant tomatoes for the fall?

A: If you can find large transplants of a fast producer like Surefire, they may produce a crop if they are planted by September 15 and the weather cooperates.

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