**WEB**

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**“Swimming Pool Q & A”**

Q. We have a swimming pool, and we clean it and replace the water every few months. Will putting the swimming pool water on the lawn hurt the grass?

A. No, pool water applied at infrequent intervals will not hurt the lawn. You may, however, want to confer with your pool supply store and figure out a way to eliminate the need to empty and refill the pool. It is my understanding that most swimming pools are managed without ever having to empty and refill. Emptying and refilling is not good water conservation practice.

Q. What is the secret to growing pines in this area? We are from the Southeast and miss the pine trees.

A. Most pines require acidic soil to prosper. If your soil is alkaline, like most of the region, you need to select from Aleppo, Italian stone and Japanese black pines. Afghan pines grow in alkaline soil but are susceptible to a fungal dieback and are not recommended.

Q. Tell us again how to deal with the fire ants on okra.

A. Spray fire ants off the plants with the water hose just before you harvest the pods. To try to eliminate them, apply bait, such as Conserve or Amdro, on the area around the garden. Apply a fast-acting insecticide, such as acephate to mounds, outside the garden. Review all labeled requirements every time you use a pesticide, including pesticides designated as organics.

Q. After years of drought, our St. Augustine lawn has been invaded by Bermuda grass. Is there an herbicide that will kill the Bermuda grass without hurting the St Augustine?

A. Unfortunately, no. The best you can do is mow the lawn three inches or taller and water each week—if the drought rules allow it. It also helps to aerate the lawn. Bermuda grass is more tolerant of compacted soil than St .Augustine grass. You will never wipe out the Bermuda, but the St. Augustine will dominate in a well-watered lawn on aerated soil that is mowed high.

Q. Stink bugs are feeding on my tomatoes. What is the best way to control them?

A. Sevin—active ingredient carbaryl—seems to be the most effective treatment. Review the label to see how long you must wait between pesticide application and harvest.

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