**WEB**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Urban Water Program Director**

**Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources**

**“Swiss Chard Q&A”**

Q. We have limited space in our vegetable garden and want 3 plants of one of the greens in addition to broccoli. What is your recommendation?

A. I would select Bright Lights Swiss chard. It is nutritious, like all of the greens, and stays productive longer into the spring. Bright Lights is also very decorative; the stems are blue, white, yellow or orange.

Q. Our new home does not have a lawn yet. There are no trees, so it is full sun. We also have two dogs that generally make paths in the lawn. What grass do you recommend?

A. Bermuda grass is the best variety for full sun and traffic. You would have to wait until May to plant it by seed, but hybrid Bermuda grass sod can be planted now.

Q. When will our tomatoes start setting fruit? The foliage looks good, and they are blooming but there are no tomatoes.

A. If the plants are in full sun, and they are the recommended varieties for our area, they should be setting fruit now. Temperatures above 95 in the day and 75 at night reduce fruit setting. The recent temperatures have fallen to a more tomato-setting friendly level. Give them another week.

Q. Some type of animal or insect has made pencil size holes in a straight line in our live oak tree. We think it is a woodpecker. Is it a problem? What should we do?

A. Sapsuckers — a type of woodpecker — make the holes you described. They feed on the sap that leaks from the holes and the insects that are attracted to the sap. The holes are not considered a threat to the tree. Enjoy the wildlife. Hummingbirds may even feed on the sap and insects.

Q. Which are the best flowers to plant in the winter if we want a source of cut flowers? We love pansies, but they do not work as cut flowers.

A. Plant snapdragons, stocks and calendula for cut flowers. The stocks have a wonderful fragrance. Rocket snapdragons are the largest snapdragon and make the best cut flowers. Calendula are a winter sunflower.

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