**Calvin Finch PhD**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

**“Q&A”**

Q: Can you tell me more about dormant oil, and should I spray my fruit trees with it?

A: Yes, dormant oil applied by label instructions to deciduous fruit trees helps control scale and other insects. It also has some disease preventative (bacteria) impact, especially if you mix in some Kocide (copper hydroxide).

Dormant oil is inexpensive and considered an organic treatment. Apply it to the stems and trunks of peaches, plums, pears, apples and other deciduous fruit trees in February before blooming begins. To avoid bud damage, it must be applied when 48 hours of temperature above 45 degrees are forecast.

Q: My local nursery has all the fruit trees in. What peach and plum trees do you recommend? How about apples and pears?

A: The peaches I have had the best luck with are Junegold, Florida King and La Feliciana. Methley and Santa Rosa plum trees do well. For apples, I think Dorsett Golden and Ana are recommended. For pears, consider Kieffer and Le Conte.

Q: Both our Meyer lemons and Mexican lime were defoliated by the freezes. How should I deal with them?

A: You can expect some stem and trunk damage but may not know the level of the damage for a few months.

During the spring flush following a freeze, leaves on freeze-damaged limbs may grow but then will wilt soon after. After this wilt occurs on the spring flush, you will have a better idea about which limbs to prune.

Once any damage is evident, typically by early summer, it will be time to remove dead branches by cutting back several inches into healthy, green wood. Protect the large limbs that are cut with diluted latex paint if the returning shoots are few. Typically, the regrowth is vigorous and paint will not be needed.

If one of your trees defoliated, it will probably survive, but you won’t be able to expect any fruit in 2014.

Q: My Swiss chard was burnt by the first freeze but looks pretty now and has started to grow again. Is it still good to eat?

A: Absolutely, all greens and spinach should taste mild because of the cold weather.

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