**Q&A**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

**Q**: What are the best vines for blooms and covering an unpleasant view?

**A**: My two favorites are cross vine and butterfly vine. Cross vine is evergreen with rust-colored flowers. It is aggressive enough to fill a fence from top to bottom but will not grow over the top of your house. Its major bloom period is March when it is covered with blooms. It has a few flowers the rest of the year. A selection called Tangerine Beauty has a superior flower with more orange. Deer do eat cross vine.

In most locations deer do not eat butterfly vine. It has yellow flowers that are showy all summer. The name comes from the seedpods, which look like green butterflies.

Both butterfly vine and cross vine are drought-tolerant.

**Q:** We have not had any rain and we have not irrigated the lawn. Does it make sense to fertilize?

**A:** It is not recommended to fertilize if the drought continues and you are not going to water the lawn. You may want to consider watering at least every three weeks for St. Augustine and once/month for zoysia and Bermuda to keep the roots healthy if it does not rain.

**Q:** I have Better Boy, Cherokee Purple and Celebrity tomatoes. Only the Celebrities are setting fruit. Is there something I can do to encourage the others to start setting fruit?

**A:** Unfortunately only Celebrity is a determinate tomato. The others are indeterminates that continue to grow height and foliage as long as the weather is conducive to growth. By the time they are ready to set fruit, it will probably be too hot.

In Central Texas conditions, it is easier to beat the heat with determinate tomatoes such as Solar Fire, 602, Tycoon, Tigress, 444, Valley Cat and Phoenix. Grow these next fall and spring.

**Q:** We need another shade tree. Our neighborhood is dominated by red oaks and live oaks, which are great, but we want a species that is oak wilt-resistant. What do you suggest?

**A:** Consider Mexican white oak, cedar elm or Mexican sycamore. White oaks are oak wilt-resistant.