**Shade Q & A**

**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

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

Q. We have room in our yard to plant at least one more shade tree. We want a species that will provide food for the birds. We know mulberries are a bird favorite. What else should we consider?

A. Mulberries grow fast and provide a berry for the spring. Hackberry fruit is consumed in the summer and fall by many birds. In the summer, Chinese pistache and anaqua provide berries readily eaten by the birds. Of the species listed, Chinese pistache is the best shade tree.

Q. I remember that a few years back you provided a maintenance recommendation for wooden tool handles that kept them from drying out. Please repeat it.

A. Obtain some boiled linseed oil, and rub it into the handle every year. It will penetrate and moisturize the wood. Make sure that you use boiled linseed oil. It is available at hardware and building material stores.

Q. Do penta have any pests? It looks like something is eating the leaves, but I can’t find an insect. Would birds do that?

A. The one pest I have experienced with penta is hornworms. The same moths that lay their eggs on tomatoes will target penta. The caterpillar grows quickly to a large size, but it is hard to find because of the green color and its ability to hide along the stem. Bt products will kill caterpillars.

Q. Is it too late to fertilize the lawn? We have been on the go so much this spring that we never got around to fertilizing.

A. It is not too late to fertilize the lawn. If you weren’t able to get it done in early May, the lawn will benefit from an application of slow-release lawn fertilizer.

Q. In April our roses were beautiful, covered with blooms. Now there is nothing. The foliage looks good, and we fertilize, irrigate and spray, as recommended. Could there be other issues?

A. Roses produce flowers in flushes of blooms. This year the first spring flush was spectacular but brief. This is especially true if you did not deadhead the spent blooms or use the blooms for cut flowers. If the weather stays relatively cool, we may get another flush before the summer lull.

Q. Our tomatoes are doing well, but now that we have removed the greens, onions and carrots from the garden, they look lonely. Is there anything else we can plant in the vegetable garden for the summer?

A. Look for eggplant and pepper transplants. It is also not too late to plant southern peas and okra by seed.