

## **Preparing Your Garden for the 17-Year Cicadas: March 26, 2021 Frequently Asked Questions and Chat Box Queries**

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### **What is a good material to wrap tree trunks in for protecting them?**

You do not need to wrap tree trunks at all. Female cicadas prefer pencil sized twigs at the ends of branches to lay their eggs into. Two sided sticky tape on the trunks is NOT recommended as it will kill other insects. Once the adults have molted, they can fly from one tree to another, wrapping the trunks will not be of any use whatsoever.

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### **Can I use bird netting on my trees?**

No, the mesh is too large. In order to exclude cicadas, the mesh openings should be no larger than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.

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### **What should I protect my tree branches with?**

Tulle fabric, Mosquito netting, Row cover fabric like Remay. Cover branches or cover the entire small tree if you need to.

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### **Are cicadas poisonous to our pets?**

No, but the exoskeletons are hard, chitinous materials and are not digestible. Consumed in excess, it may make your dog sick.

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### **Should new tree planting be postponed?**

Yes. Fruit producers advise not planting within 2 years of a Brood X emergence. For other trees, you can wait until fall, which is the best time to plant trees any way.

## **When will Cicadas Emerge?**

We expect to see the first sign of Brood X cicadas in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April. They will be with us through the end of May and into the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June. Later, we might see the larger more sparse emergence of the annual Cicadas in July.

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## **Where will Brood X emerge?**

Some annual cicadas emerge every year but the big Brood X emergence will be seen from South Central Indiana to Maryland and northwest Delaware, and from Pennsylvania to western North Carolina and N central Georgia. Heavy concentrations will be in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and In Virginia it will be mostly the northern parts with some extension down through the southwest and Shenandoah valley. South Central and Eastern Virginia will not be seriously affected.

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## **What damage do they do to plants?**

They do not eat your plants and are not interested in your vegetables and flower gardens. They come out to mate and to lay eggs. Some damage is done to the ends of tree branches when the female uses her ovipositor to cut slits in the pencil sized twigs to lay her eggs. When they are underground in their immature life form, they do feed on tree and grass roots, but once they emerge they do not feed in any significant way.

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## **Can they damage my shrubs?**

They prefer trees that are 6' tall but you may see some isolated damage on tall woody shrubs near wooded areas.

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## **Will large trees be damaged?**

No, but large trees will lose the ends of some of their branches (flagging). Small trees are at risk of serious damage because a majority of their branches are pencil sized. Very young trees will be spared as the cicadas prefer trees that are at least 6' tall.

Some woody vines may also be damaged that have pencil sized vines.

### **How can trees be pollinated if they are being covered by mesh to protect from cicadas?**

Mesh to exclude cicadas should be ¼ inch. This is still large enough to admit some smaller pollinators like native bees, but yes unless you hand pollinate, you might see a reduction in fruit production this year.

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### **What should be done to help damaged trees heal?**

If you can reach it, try to make a clean cut back to a healthy side shoot or branch in order to remove cicada damaged branch ends. Other than that, make sure that your trees have 1” of water per week through our hottest driest weeks of summer to encourage new growth.

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### **Will Cicadas affect other insects, mosquito predators, monarchs or the milkweed the monarch larvae feed on?**

No, they are interested in one thing only. Mating and laying eggs in usually woody deciduous trees that are near wooded areas.

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**Trees often damaged include:** Oak, elm, maple, apple and pear, dogwood, peach, hickory, ash, chestnut, cherry

**Trees rarely or never damaged:** Evergreens, sumac, osage orange, euonymus, viburnum, pawpaws

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### **Should I use insecticides to kill them before they damage my plants?**

No. There is no justification for use of insecticides in a residential setting on ornamental trees. Insecticides are not effective because they are not feeding on the plants and there are so many of them high up in the trees you are unlikely to make a serious dent in the population. What will be damaged are pollinators that are closer to the ground visiting flowering plants. You can try to use an organic repelling agent called kaolin clay that is applied as a liquid the clay particles in solution dry on the branches and fruit and may discourage egg laying and feeding by other insects too.