

Brood X 17 Year Cicada

For the last 17 years the larval cicada has lived a foot or more below ground, feeding on tree root sap.

The insects' alarm bell rings when the soil 8 inches deep reaches 64 degrees. The insects molt, spread their wings and live out the rest of their lives for two to four weeks.

They will emerge in massive numbers, as many as 1.5 million cicadas per acre in some areas.

Cicadas are best known for their loud mating call, which can approach 100 decibels. The noise can actually hurt your ears. Three species among the 17-year cicadas have different calls. The largest make a wavering sound, like a flying saucer in a 1950s sci-fi film. The mid-sized group has a sizzling chorus, like water being dumped into hot oil, and the smallest make a noise like a small tambourine.

Fish, birds, snakes, turtles, raccoons and other predators gorge on the vulnerable insects, but plenty survive to breed. Eggs laid on tree twigs foster the next generation of nymphs, which drop to the ground, burrow underground, and in the case of Brood X, will be due to resurface in 2038.

The good news is Cicadas do not bite, decimate crops, spread disease and they are not poisonous. However, they will damage young trees, especially fruit trees. So, this year, skip the pesticides and cover your young trees and fruit trees with fine netting.

