

The Cicadas are Coming, The Cicadas are Coming: The Truth About the Brood X Periodical Cicada

Information from Town Arborist Dr. Tolbert Feather

The periodical cicada in this area, Brood X, will emerge this year and is one of many broods that reappear every 17 years. The periodical cicadas have black bodies and red eyes and emerge in mid-May (when ground temperatures reach >64°F) completing their life cycle by the end of June.

Although the adults feed on woody plants, potential damage to trees and shrubs occurs when the female cicadas insert eggs into the tips of twigs. Sufficient damage can cause the loss of branch tips. On large trees, this loss is not noticeable. On smaller trees, it can significantly reduce the canopy, but the trees do recover.

Residents can isolate young trees with screening in May to prevent damage (see below), but there are no treatments to manage the cicadas. Cicadas have little interest in annuals and perennials. Newly emerged cicadas may be seen resting or emerging on non-woody plants, but they will soon thereafter move up into the trees. The Town will be placing netting over some smaller redbuds trees that were planted last fall. The larger Town trees will be damaged but are not usually killed by the cicada activity.

The distinctive “singing” or mating call is the first sign that the little wide-eyed creatures are active. Although their appearance may seem ominous, cicadas do not bite people or carry or transmit any diseases. They are a true wonder of nature and a great food source for birds and small mammals.

For more information regarding the Brood X Periodical Cicada and the other broods that appear in this region, please visit the following websites:

- <https://www.cicadamania.com/cicadas/periodical-cicada-brood-x-10-will-emerge-in-15-states-in-2021/>
- <http://insects.ummz.lsa.umich.edu/fauna/>

There is also an app, Cicada Safari, that you can download to help document Brood X. Have fun with them; it’s a great experience for kids.

Periodical Cicada – Protecting Trees

Trees can be protected by covering with netting, which needs to be at least 1-cm or 3/8-inch mesh or smaller. The netting is plastic and can be purchased from hardware stores, [Amazon](#), or [specialty netting websites](#). The netting is cut, draped over the tree, and secured with a zip tie around the trunk.

Trees should be netted by the first week in May and can be uncovered when the periodical cicadas are gone, usually by the end of June.