

Seventeen-year (Brood X) periodical cicada 2021

These periodical cicadas were noticed by early American colonists in Massachusetts. They are known for their 17-year synchronized life cycles, dense aggregations, and loud, shrill droning noise which they use to find mates. In 2021, Brood X will emerge from the soil in our area when soil temperatures reach about 65° F for several days, typically about mid-May. These are not the familiar annual cicadas we hear each year.



These periodical cicadas only live for several weeks, in numbers often over a million per acre. They mate, and the females lay eggs by gouging dozens of trench-like depressions along twigs and small branches, which might cause the twig to “flag” or break off. The eggs hatch into nymphs, which drop, enter the soil and feed on fine roots for the next 17 years.

Cicadas are harmless to people and do not chew the leaves of plants. Cicadas are eaten by birds, raccoons and other animals. The damage from twig flagging or death is usually minor, and trees replace the lost twigs during the subsequent growing seasons. Management is usually not necessary. Fine netting can be placed over small, high-value trees but needs to be installed prior to cicada emergence.