

17-Year Locusts Will Invade Pa. This Spring

In almost 600 counties in 15 states east of the Mississippi and the District of Columbia, a weird, unending drone is going to fill the air this spring.

During May and June, this noise will herald the arrival of hordes of periodical cicadas—or 17-year locust—of Brood XIV which last appeared in 1957. In parts of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida, the much smaller Brood XXI, which operates on a 13-year cycle, also will emerge.

Lancaster County is expected to see some locust activity, while heavy concentrations of cicadas are forecast for 14 Pa. counties, including Schuylkill and

Berks. Lebanon county is not expected to be hit by the locusts.

Damage done by female cicadas during egg laying is a major threat to young or recently-transplanted trees and plants. Over 70 species of plants are known to have sustained serious injury, with apple, peach, pear, hickory, and oak trees high on the list.

Homeowners, nurserymen and fruit growers who fail to protect plants subject to attack will run the dire risk of heavy losses.

Cicada nymphs emerge from the ground—usually at night—with males preceding females by several days. By

morning, masses of empty cases may litter tree trunk, twigs, fencing and other supports. The males begin their distinctive singing to attract females, and mating begins within a week, followed three or four days later by egg laying.

The female selects a vigorous twig and punctures the bark, fashioning a pair of ragged slits in it with her long egg-laying appendage. Twenty or more slits are sometimes made in a single twig with approximately two dozen eggs deposited in each one. This destructive process is repeated on several twigs until each female has laid as many as 600 eggs. About six weeks after emergence, adults begin to die off rapidly.

In addition to fruit loss in orchards, and dieback caused in growing tips of ornamentals, these wounds also can cause diseases and insects to gain a foothold. Scale insects and woolly aphids frequently follow in the wake of cicada egg laying. This can lead to severe decline in the cases of established apple trees, while young transplanted orchard tree have been killed.

Cicada eggs hatch after six or seven weeks. The young shed their protective membranes and drop to the ground. Burrowing into it, they begin to feed on rootlets that grow into the cells that they form. These cells will serve as homes for the next 17 years, during which time four nymphal stages will occur.

Natural causes, such as weather, insect predators and birds, take a reasonably high toll of all cicada broods, but they must be supplemented by a regular chemical control program if heavy damage to plants is to be avoided. The most effective

program has proved to be a spray mixture to two tablespoons of Sevin 50W carbaryl insecticide (a wettable powder) per gallon of water. In commercial

applications made by orchardists and nurserymen, two pounds of Sevin 50W should be thoroughly mixed with 100 gallons of water.

Applied as soon as adults emerge, each spray should offer good protection for one to three weeks. In wet weather, more frequent applications may be necessary. Woodlands

growing beside orchards should also be sprayed along its fringe to provide an additional "buffer zone" against cicada attacks.

Sevin carbaryl is biodegradable and compared with other agricultural insecticides it ranks low in toxicity to people, farm animals, birds and fish.

Growing Degrees, Rainfall

A report from Penn State of weekly crop and weather round-ups with a report on weather conditions for the week ending May 6.

In Lancaster, the average temperature for the week was 58 degrees, the normal average for the time of year.

Growing degree days for crops that start at 40 degrees totaled 511 degree days or 101 more than the normal average. For crops starting at 50 degrees growing degree days totaled 198, which is 80 more than average.

Rainfall for the week was .51 inches. Rainfall measured from April 1 was 5.37 inches, 1.05 inches more than the normal average.

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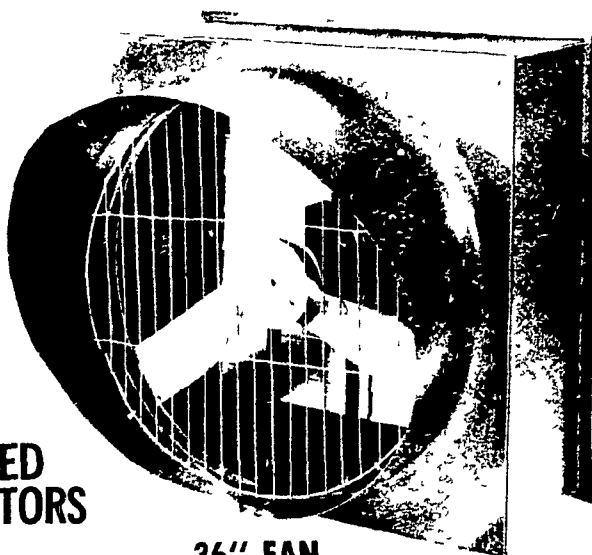
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