



# National Agricultural Library

## *Ag Facts For Kids:* Really big bugs are coming!

After 17 years cicadas come out to play in 2004. They are also called periodical cicadas or 17 year locusts. If you live in one of these states DE, GA, IL, IN, KY, MD, MI, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, TN, VA, or WVA you will see them.

### What are they anyway?

Around mid-May through late June cicadas will be coming out. Cicadas are flying, plant-feeding insects. They are related to leafhoppers, aphids, and scale insects.

### What do they look like?



Adult cicadas are large (a little over 1 inch with a wingspan of 3 inches). The photograph is the real size. Save this page. When you find one, compare it to this photo.. They have bright red eyes, are fat and black to dark brown. Most North American species have clear wings, held over the reddish brown to yellow abdomen. The abdomen is on the bottom side, underneath the bug.

### What do they eat and where do they live?

The sap of tree roots. They live in forests, near grasslands and pastures.

### Are they dangerous?

They do not sting or bite. When approached, a cicada will simply fly away. If handled, both males and females struggle to fly, and males make a loud defensive buzzing sound that may startle but is otherwise harmless. Cicadas are not poisonous or known to transmit disease. They can do damage to young trees if too many appear at the same time.



### What is all of that noise?

Male cicadas sing by using a pair of tymbals, or ridged membranes, found on the first abdominal segment. The abdomen of a male cicada is hollow and may act as a resonating chamber; the songs of individuals are loud, and singing large groups can be virtually deafening. Females of most cicada species do not have sound-producing organs. Cicadas usually sing in a sunny spot on sunny days. Between late April and early June both males and females get together in groups for the first couple of weeks to sing and mate.



## Where do they hide for 17 years?

Most of their lives are spent underground in areas with lots of trees that lose their leaves in the fall. They live in large groups called broods. It takes 6-8 weeks for cicada eggs to hatch. Once they hatch, they bury themselves in search of a tree root to start feeding. These nymphs go through five stages of development before they re-emerge to the surface as adults. Thousands of cicadas come out at the same time. Cicada nymphs dig their way out of the soil during late May and June and climb up tree trunks, posts and poles. Each adult may live for 5 or 6 weeks.

## More Cicada Stuff:

**Kid's Cicada Hunt:** [saltthesandbox.org/cicada\\_hunt/](http://saltthesandbox.org/cicada_hunt/) **Cicada Mania:** [www.dancentury.com/cicada/](http://www.dancentury.com/cicada/)

**Bug Identification:** [www.ex.ac.uk/bugclub/bugid.htm](http://www.ex.ac.uk/bugclub/bugid.htm)

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Please feel free to make additional copies for educational use.

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Visit <http://www.nal.usda.gov/outreach/youthkids.htm>

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## Cicada Coloring Page

