

HOT NEWS

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How To Make Cicadas Shut Up

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Not only do annual cicadas make a lot of noise in the trees during the late summer but they can also make a lot of noise in your hand if you know the trick. Gently squeeze the thorax of the cicada between the thumb and forefinger, gradually increasing pressure until the insect begins to vibrate and make a buzzing sound. Do not be discouraged if this does not work - not all cicadas will perform. Even so it is a fun activity.



Cicada

In years past some people have called these buzzing insects "locusts." Apparently, there are some tree-dwelling grasshoppers in Europe, and when early immigrants arrived in the Americas they assumed that the cicadas were the same as locusts in Europe. Early settlers then called our chirping cicadas "locusts," assuming that they were the same as the locusts in Europe. Just to set the record straight - cicadas are not related to grasshoppers at all.

When it comes to cicadas, there are two major groups in Indiana, those that appear in huge numbers every 13 or 17 years (periodical cicadas) and those that appear every summer year (annual cicadas). Remember that the true lifecycle of the so-called annual cicada typically spans 2 to 5 years; thus they are "annual" only in the sense that members of the species reappear annually.

Cicadas begin life as an egg laid in a slit of a tree twig. Upon hatching, the tiny nymph drops to the ground and burrows down, where it will live most of its life, sucking juices from plant roots. These nymphs remain underground for 2–5 years. When ready, during the dog days of July and August, they dig to the surface, climb a tree or other object, and molt to become a winged adult. The shed skin remains behind, while the adults sing, mate, and produce the next generation. Very little tree damage is done by cicadas but they are never-the-less obnoxious insects. Cicada singing can be really irritating. The incessant, shrill, buzz saw noise becomes truly obnoxious after a while. Many contact the insect diagnostic laboratory to ask "How can I make cicadas shut up?" I like to point out that there are only three things that can make them shut up.

- 1) Occasionally, you'll hear the irritating cicada's song suddenly interrupted by a short but distinct screech. If the song does not resume momentarily, it is probably because the cicada has been attacked by a predatory bird or a cicada killer wasp. In either case, it brings an instant and gratifying calm and order to the yard – until the next cicada begins singing.
- 2) Cicadas only sing when temperatures are above 72°F. Cool evenings (think winter) shuts them up.
- 3) Rather than waiting for cold temperatures or a predator, you may gently squeeze the thorax of the cicada between the thumb and forefinger and gradually increase pressure until the insect quits vibrating and making that buzzing sound – then keep squeezing. They will eventually shut up.