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WILLIAM QUINN & SONS



William Quinn & Sons Newsletter

Spring 2007

The Flight of the Cicada

GET READY, THIS IS IT! The 17 year periodical cicadas will soon emerge in Illinois. By the end of May, when soil temperatures reach 60°F, you will begin to see quarter-sized holes in the ground as the cicadas begin the next stage in their lifecycle. Illinois will have the largest emergence of cicadas compared to any other U.S. state. An average of 27 cicadas per square foot, or 133,000 per acre, is what is to be expected.

Many people mistake the cicada for a locust, which is similar to a grass hopper. The males make their way to trees and produce an acoustic – almost singing – sound in an effort to attract females. Their mating calls are very loud, and you may find yourself struggling to carry on a conversation outside during their peak mating period. The mating period lasts a few weeks after they've emerged from the ground. Do not be frightened if a cicada lands on you. They don't bite or sting and the females sometimes mistake lawn mowers and weed wackers as male cicadas due to the humming of the machines.

After the males and females mate, the females will make small slits in the bark of trees where they deposit their eggs. Because so many cicadas are expected, they may cause minor damage to smaller branches on larger trees and shrubs. Cicadas will not affect evergreens. Most trees will have small branches die and break off which is normal and does not cause permanent damage to the tree.

Young trees with a trunk diameter of 2 ½" or less may experience more damage, or even death. Cheese cloth or bridal tulle, which can be purchased at any fabric store, can protect tender plants from damage. They should be covered as soon as the cicadas emerge. To properly ensure protection of the tree, use the following simple steps:

- 1) Completely cover the tree with the cloth
- 2) Tightly tie the cloth around the base of the tree using string or thread

Protecting your at risk trees will prevent female cicadas from laying their eggs. If you live in an older community with established trees, cicadas will be everywhere. Newer associations, where trees have been removed before construction, may not be as affected. It is a waste of time and money to attempt to use pesticides to control the cicadas due to the large numbers we are expecting.

Scientists have no concrete answers as to why the cicadas exist, except for the fact that they are part of the food chain for many small animals and birds. Don't be alarmed if you find your dog eating them, they are harmless. Actually, as silly as it sounds, some people eat them as snacks. The cicadas are microwaveable and smell like almonds once roasted. If salted, they have a crispy, nutty flavor!



Close-up of an adult cicada.

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CATHY'S CORNER

SPRING HAS SPRUNG; well, at least that's what the calendar says. You wouldn't know it by the extreme changes in the weather though. Two weeks into the regular maintenance season, we usually aren't exchanging pruning shears with snow shovels. Though on April 11th, that's exactly what happened. The next day we were right back on the street completing the Spring clean-up.

The past winter's moderate snow fall hampered our usual dormant pruning in January and February. Mild March temperatures allowed us to catch up. Weather experts have stated that this may be the warmest summer on record. But because they were unable to predict the drought of 2005, who knows what to expect this year!

By now I'm sure you've read that the cicadas are coming. They are a big nuisance, but the good thing is that they only come out for a short time every 17 years. Returning customers know that we usually start walk-throughs in April and early May, but the cold weather has delayed the typical budding periods. It's best to wait until all the shrubs have budded out or bloomed in order to determine replacement needs.

Anyone wishing to schedule a Spring walk-through can call me, or the office, at any time. We are looking forward to a new season!

- Cathy

What will happen to the damaged plants?

THE WARM WEATHER in March created an opportunity for trees and shrubs to bud out – weeks ahead of schedule. The newly emerged leaves didn't have a chance to harden-off, or adjust to our environment, before the extremely cold weather returned. The recent cold snap has caused most new buds to die off. April in Chicago is usually mildly cold, but temperatures we experienced were below 21° and extreme. But the cold weather alone isn't to blame for burnt landscapes. Wind gusts up to 53 MPH created havoc for the newly emerged delicate leaves.

Healthy trees and shrubs have had enough food reserves to develop another set of leaves. They may,

however, look ugly for a few weeks with leaves appearing brown until the new growth appears. Fortunately, the crabapple trees and lilacs were still in tight bud through the brunt of the cold wave. They should still flower this year but bloom time may be delayed and not as brilliant as usual.

The cold weather unfortunately did create havoc for magnolia and rhododendron blooms. Spring bulbs have also struggled with the weather, but should recover for next year as long as we don't experience any more unexpected extreme weather this season. Don't worry about the health of your plants, no permanent damage was sustained.

Don't Push the Season

THE CALENDAR MAY say it's spring, but the snow we've had in April has proved otherwise. Garden centers have stocked their shelves with pansies, violas, and primroses. Following the bad weather in February, and a few unusually warm days in March, we were all ready to hit the outdoors.



Closeup of a Primrose

One important fact you need to know is that the garden centers will begin selling plants based on their contracts with growers from areas all over the United States. There is typically no guarantee for plant survival. In order to increase variety, stores are carrying borderline plants – meaning plants that should be in warmer climates. Please keep in mind that we are located in the USDA's Hardiness Zone 5.

If you see roses, hydrangeas, or perennials in bloom, that means they were grown farther south in the country and may not survive in our area. Always look for plants that are explicitly labeled "Midwest Grown," when possible. The last chance of frost for our areas is Memorial Day. This may seem late, but it has happened in the past where annuals

planted too early didn't make it through a late season frost. It is best to use your judgement and watch extended weather forecasts. We use Mother's Day as a guideline; if the weather outlook is favorable, it is usually safe to start planting your annuals the following week.

Why You Should Use ONLY Double Processed Premium Hardwood Mulch

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- Provide nutrients
- Control erosion
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There are several types of mulches available for purchase. The most common in the United States are hardwood, cypress, pine and cedar mulch. **Hardwood and pine** mulches break down and release nutrients into the soil. **Cypress and cedar** mulches break down significantly slower making the two usable primarily for decorative purposes only.

Beware of the "cheaper" mulches that use words such as: *economy, nature, or garden blends*. These mulches can contain ground up pallets, diseased trees, or unknown harmful chemicals. As the old saying goes, "nothing in life is free." Companies that

offer free mulch and wood chips are saving money by giving it away rather than paying for disposal. **Beware** of these "deals" as there is typically no way to find out where the product originated, whether or not it was treated, or the potential harm it may bring to your plants.

