

◉ THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL ◉

Fungi Study

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ALPINE JELLY CONE

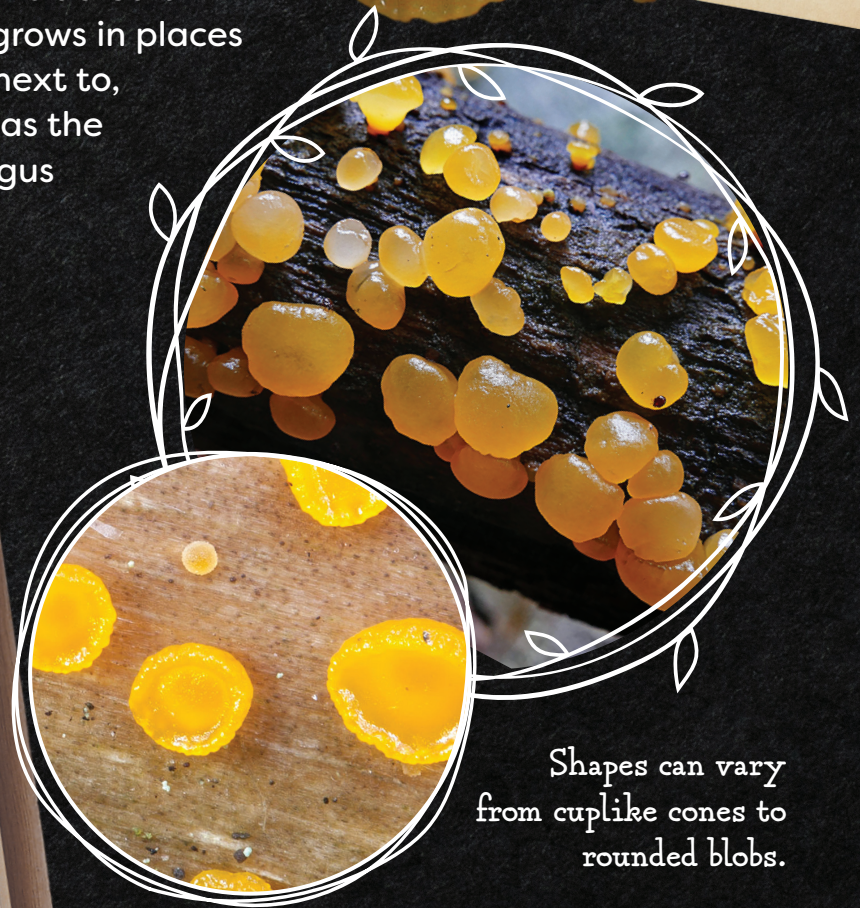
Fungi Facts

Common name: Alpine Jelly Cone
Type of fungi: Mushroom
Scientific name: Guepiniopsis alpina
Found: Western North America, Iran
Substrate: Rotting, barkless conifer wood

The alpine jelly cone is considered a snowbank fungus, meaning it grows in places with a deep winter snowpack. It grows next to, or even in, the melting snow. Also known as the “Poor Man’s Gumdrops,” this gelatinous fungus has the texture of a gumdrop and is sticky when wet. As it matures, it dries, hardens, and turns a reddish-orange color. It may look yummy, and it could be eaten, but it is not considered desirable.

Observe and Reflect

Note how some alpine jelly cones are cup-shaped, others are cone-shaped, and some are little blobs. Imagine touching one, feeling its soft, rubbery surface, or perhaps its wet stickiness. Do you think it would feel like a gumdrop if you were to squeeze one?



Shapes can vary from cuplike cones to rounded blobs.

BASKET FUNGUS

An immature fungus expands as it ages.

An immature basket fungus begins as a ball or egg shape. These fungi are edible in that state but not necessarily desirable. When they are fully mature, they have opened up and expanded into a basket-like ball. The inside surface is coated with a stinky slime that is covered in spores. The stench attracts flies, which then spread the spores.

Fully matured, the expanded fungus develops its own slime.



Fungi Facts

Common name: Basket Fungus

Type of fungi: Mushroom, edible when young

Scientific name: *Ileodictyon cibarium*

Found: New Zealand, Australia, South Africa

Substrate: Near woody debris, lawns, gardens



Observe and Reflect

Doesn't the basket fungus look like a tiny jungle gym? If you were an insect that loved slimy stink, this would be the perfect playground! If you ever find a basket fungus, you can put a small balloon inside (if you can stand the smell), blow it up, tie it off, and let the fungus dry around the balloon. Then pop the balloon and remove it. You will have a dried, basket-like ball made by nature!



Observe and Reflect

Count the tentacles—or fingers—of each mushroom pictured. Which one has the most? Which has the least? Can you imagine finding one in your yard? If you did, would you rather touch it or sniff it?

Fungi Facts

Common name: Devil's Fingers

Type of fungi: Mushroom

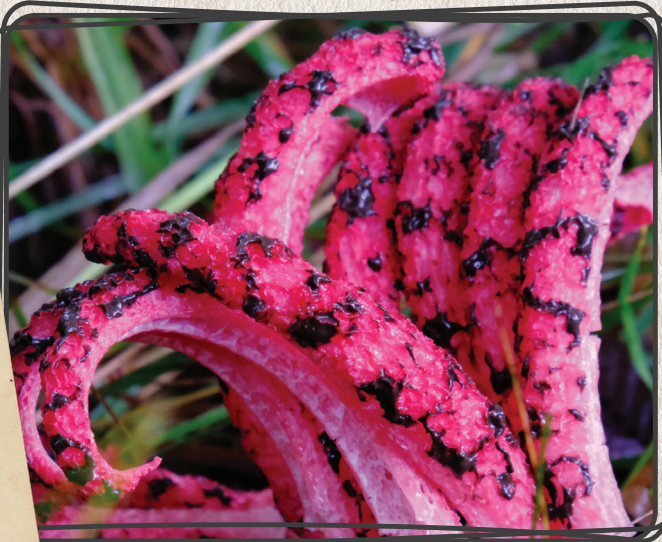
Scientific name: *Clathrus archeri*

Found: India, Australia, Europe, New Zealand

Substrate: Leaf litter



DEVIL'S FINGERS



Also known as octopus stinkhorn, this sinister-looking fungus has a stink to rival its name. The blackish green slime—called gleba—on its “tentacles” smells like rotting flesh, and flies love it! Flies land and then spread the mushroom’s spores far and wide.

ORANGE PEEL FUNGUS



Fungi Facts

Common name: Orange Peel Fungus

Type of fungi: Mushroom, edible

Scientific name: Aleuria aurantia

Found: North America, Europe, Chile

Substrate: Soil



Orange peel fungus starts out looking like a cup. Then the edges get wavy and sometimes split. While most cup fungi are poisonous, this one is edible, though not particularly tasty. Its desirability comes from the pop of color it adds to a salad or other dish, enhancing its visual appeal.

Observe and Reflect

Often, the underside of the cup is a paler orange. If you have an orange or a tangerine, peel it and try to make it look like one of these pictures, or create an orange peel fungus design of your own. Remember to arrange it with the white pith on the bottom.



PARROT TOADSTOOL

This slimy mushroom is named for the parrot-like color of the juveniles. As they age, they dry and become a dingy yellow—rather unremarkable looking. In California, this species can look blue and turn red as it ages. It is sometimes stinky, and the slime on it tastes acidic.



P

Fungi Facts

Common name: Parrot Toadstool

Type of fungi: Mushroom, edible

Scientific name: *Gliophorus psittacinus*

Found: Greenland, Iceland, Western Europe, UK, North and South America, Japan

Substrate: Forest floor



Observe and Reflect

Notice that the vibrant green color of this unique mushroom carries down through the stem, unlike some other mushrooms that have a much lighter stem than cap. You may also notice that the cap's center has a protruding dome, called an umbo, or you could say it has an umbonate cap.

SCARLET ELF CUP

Attractive as it is, this mushroom is not usually collected for the table, except perhaps as a striking decoration, as it has been displayed in England. The Oneida tribe, on the other hand, has historically used it as medicine. Its diameter is usually between 2 to 7 centimeters (0.78 to 2.75 inches), with a very short stem.



Fungi Facts

Common name: Scarlet Elf Cup

Type of fungi: Mushroom

Scientific name: Sarcoscypha austriaca

Found: North America, South America,
Australia, Africa, Europe, Asia

Substrate: Rotting hardwood



Observe and Reflect

If you were to touch the outer surface of this “cup,” it would feel much like felt or suede, as it has a dense coating of tiny hair-like hyphae. The fertile red inner surface, however, is smooth to the touch. If you found one filled with raindrops, it might appear to carry fruit punch, ready for a party!

◉ VIOLET POUCH ◉

Before it pokes out of the ground, the violet pouch is white. Exposure to the sun causes it to become violet. It can grow up to 15.2 centimeters (6 inches) tall and 7.6 centimeters (3 inches) wide. Its smooth-looking cap is sticky. The gleba inside is pale brownish red.



V Fungi Facts

Common name: Violet Pouch

Type of fungi: Mushroom, not edible

Scientific name: *Cortinarius porphyroideus*

Found: Australia, New Zealand

Substrate: Forest floor



Observe and Reflect

Take in the violet color of this stunning fungus. Notice that the stem, or stipe, is a paler violet than the cap. Do you know someone whose favorite color is purple to whom you would love to show this mushroom? Ask to take a picture with a smartphone and send it to someone you care about.

WRINKLED PEACH

This was once a very rare mushroom to find in England and Ireland—until a disease killed many elm trees in the mid-1900s. Then for a couple of decades, this exquisite mushroom was a common find on rotting elm wood. Since then, it has become rare once again. Although enticing, its flesh is very bitter and therefore considered inedible.

Observe and Reflect

Notice that the stem tends to “bleed” droplets of orange or red. The vein-like texture of the cap is rubbery to the touch, as is the flesh inside. It can range in color from light pink to salmon-orange to reddish pink. If you are able to spot this incredible mushroom in the wild, you won’t need to doubt what it is: there are only two species of *Rhodotus*, *R. palmatus* and *R. asperior*, and they look almost identical.

Fungi Facts

Common name: Wrinkled Peach
Type of fungi: Mushroom, not edible
Scientific name: *Rhodotus palmatus*
Found: Europe, Asia, North America,
North Africa
Substrate: Rotting elm wood





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From the warm, humid forests of Madagascar to the frigid glaciers of Antarctica, and from the decomposing trunk of a fallen oak tree to the mystery leftovers in the back of your fridge, fungi are hard at work breaking down dead organic matter as the earth's recycling superstars. Get ready to be amazed, and enjoy exploring the captivating world of fungi!



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