

FUNGI IN SCHOOLS

for
CHILDREN
TEACHERS
PARENTS

and other
interested parties

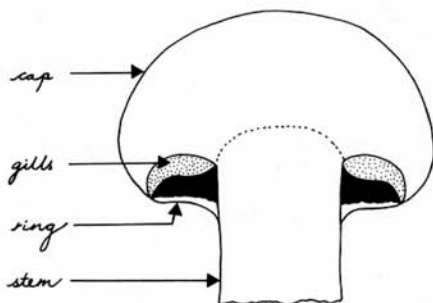


You cannot find mushrooms in the fields in January so we are starting this series by looking at the ones on sale in shops. The picture shows mushrooms of different sizes growing in a bed of sterilized horse manure covered by soil. These are picked and sent to the shops either as small buttons or as much larger fully grown mushrooms — not shown in this picture.

Look first at a button. Use a piece of thin string to measure right across the top from one side of the stem to the other. Now cut it in half — from top to bottom.

It has 4 parts:

CAP
GILLS
RING
STEM



The delicate pink gills are covered by the ring and you will see them more easily if you gently pull part of the ring away.

Now look at a fully grown mushroom.

It has the same 4 parts. Cut one in half right down the middle of the cap and stem. You may need help as the cap wobbles.

The cap has become nearly flat and much larger. How much larger than the button you measured?

The gills have changed colour.

The ring has torn and no longer covers the gills. Part of it usually stays on the stem and part of it is on the edge of the cap as a soft white frill.

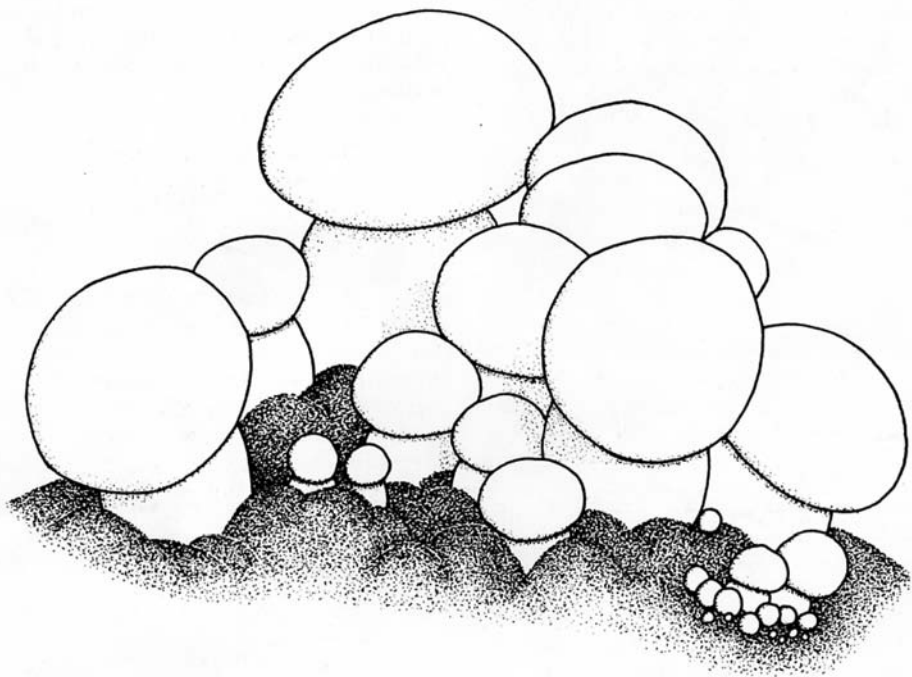
The stem has grown longer. How much?

You can watch the small buttons grow into large mushrooms. Put some small buttons on a damp paper towel in a plastic sandwich box. Put on the lid, and keep the box in a cool place. Look at the mushrooms every day.

There are many things to try with your mushrooms.

Next time: Why the gills have changed colour.

Sheila M Francis



Adapted, with the author's kind permission, from: Kendrick, B (1986). *A Young Person's Guide to the Fungi*. Canada: Mycologue Publications, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5M5. ISBN 0-9692237-1-4.