British Mycological Society promoting fungal science

The Fungi Name Game

Instructions
The object of this activity is to pick the true names from the fake fungal names. Students are encouraged to shout out names to find the real names, which form a path of touching squares from the top of the grid to the bottom (shown as the white squares in the solution on page 3 below).

Copy and distribute paper copies of the grid, or copy onto an OHP transparency; then cross-out (or obscure if using an OHP) the fake names to show the progress of the path (see page 3).

REAL NAMES
Blueleg Brownie
Dingy Twiglet
Drumstick Truffle-club
Earpick Fungus
Frosty Funnel
Lawyer's Wig
Lemon Disco
Mousepee Pinkgill
Plums and Custard
Silky Piggyback
Turkey Tail
Witches' Butter

FAKE NAMES
Booty Mould
Bubble Puff
Chalk and Cheese
Cherry Bonnet
Coffee Hump
Deadly Spider
Double Jewel
Flutter Devil
Hairy Stinkweed
Mottled Fairy
Peacock Oyster
Rabbits Tail
Slimy Donkey
Smooth Talon
Square Pore
Turtle Truffle
Wasp Crabtree
Waxy Sheep

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COFFEE HUMP	**EARPICK FUNGUS**	**DINGY TWIGLET**	**BUBBLE PUFF**	**HAIRY STINKWEED**
WASP CRABTREE	**TURTLE TRUFFLE**	**PLUMS AND CUSTARD**	**SQUARE PORE**	**WAXY SHEEP**
DEADLY SPIDER	**SILKY PIGGYBACK**	**TURKEY TAIL**	**WITCHES' BUTTER**	**SMOOTH TALON**
DOUBLE JEWEL	**LEMON DISCO**	**FLUTTER DEVIL**	**SLIMY DONKEY**	**BOOTY MOULD**
MOTTLED FAIRY	**FROSTY FUNNEL**	**LAWYER'S WIG**	**DRUMSTICK TRUFFLE CLUB**	**BLUELEG BROWNIE**
PEACOCK OYSTER	**CHALK AND CHEESE**	**RABBITS TAIL**	**MOUSEPEE PINKGILL**	**CHERRY BONNET**

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Here's the grid with the fake names greyed-out

COFFEE HUMP	EARPICK FUNGUS	DINGY TWIGLET	BUBBLE PUFF	HAIRY STINKWEED
WASP CRABTREE	TURTLE TRUFFLE	PLUMS AND CUSTARD	SQUARE PORE	WAXY SHEEP
DEADLY SPIDER	SILKY PIGGYBACK	TURKEY TAIL	WITCHES' BUTTER	SMOOTH TALON
DOUBLE JEWEL	LEMON DISCO	FLUTTER DEVIL	SLIMY DONKEY	BOOTY MOULD
MOTTLED FAIRY	FROSTY FUNNEL	LAWYER'S WIG	DRUMSTICK TRUFFLE CLUB	BLUELEG BROWNIE
PEACOCK OYSTER	CHALK AND CHEESE	RABBITS TAIL	MOUSEPEE PINKGILL	CHERRY BONNET

Scientific names

As you can see, the common names are descriptive and memorable (what do you think Mousepee Pinkgill describes? [Think: smell; think: colour]), and the same approach is used for scientific names.

The main difference is that scientific names are part of a standard worldwide classification system of all living things. So there are internationally-agreed rules to producing scientific names. Also, scientific names are generally in Latin (a few are based on the Greek language), which means that whatever the native language of the scientists, they always use the same name for the same organism. Scientific names consist of two words: the name of the GENUS followed by a name for the SPECIES; this is called the binomial nomenclature. The genus name is rather like your family name and the species name is rather like your first name.

The genus name (which is always capitalized) and the species name are usually printed in italics, like this: *Homo sapiens*. When handwritten they should be underlined.

When used with a common name, the scientific name usually follows in parentheses, for example, "…the house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is an endangered species…" The scientific name should generally be written in full when it is first used or when several species from the same genus are being listed or discussed in the same report. After that, it may be abbreviated by just using an initial (and full stop) to stand for the genus. For example the bacterium *Escherichia coli* is often referred to as *E. coli*, and *Tyrannosaurus rex* as *T. rex*. The abbreviation "sp." is used when the actual specific name is not known: for example *Homo* sp. denotes "a species of the genus *Homo*." Similarly, the abbreviation "spp." (which is plural) indicates "several nameless species" (you may not want to name them, maybe because the point you are making applies to all species in that genus, or you may not know the names but want to make a general point about organisms of that sort).

Genus names are nouns that can come from anywhere. For example, oak is always *Quercus*, the beech tree is always *Fagus*, the pine tree is always *Pinus*, and these names are used because they are the classical Latin names that were used in ancient Rome. Other names are made up to be descriptive of the organism (like *Helianthus*, which literally means sun-flower and is a combination of two Greek words – *Helios* was the ancient Greek god of the sun and *anth*(*us*) means flower), or to commemorate some famous person (like *Eugenia* which was named for Prince Eugene of Savoy, who was a patron of botany and horticulture), while other names come from other languages (like *Narcissus* (daffodil) and *Anemone* (anemone) that come from ancient Greek).

Species names are often descriptive (like *deliciosa* for delicious, *foetida* for foul smelling, *squamosa* for having scales, *sapiens* for intelligent, *annuus* for annual, and so on).

Now what does that fungus name mean...?

Latin names can often be a stumbling block for beginners in all aspects of biology including mycology, they seem so daunting, so... so long! But once you understand that the name (derived from Latin or Greek) contains information about the fungus - often describing a key physical feature or commemorating a person's name - then it can be fascinating to find out the origin (etymology) of the name.

So here are the meanings of some fungal names:

Amanita inopinata: Amanita - probably from Mt Amanus in Cilicia; inopinata = unexpected.

Sarcodon imbricatus, S. squamosus: Sarcodon - Sarco = flesh, don = tooth; imbricatus = covered with tiles; squamosus = scaly.

Lentaria delicata: Lentaria - Lentus = pliant; delicata = tender, delicate.

Cytidia salicina: Cytidia - from the Greek for a hollow vessel; salicina - pertaining to a willow.

Boletus fragrans: Boletus - from the Greek for a clod (the shape?); fragrans = scented.

Cystoderma fallax, C. terrei: Cystoderma - Cysto = cell, derma = skin; fallax = deceptive; terrei = in honour of Mr Michael Terrey.

Tephrocybe ellisii: Tephrocybe - Tephro = ash-coloured, - cybe - from the Greek for head; ellisii – in honour of Ted Ellis, the distinguished Norfolk naturalist.

Hebeloma crustuliniforme, H. helodes, H. sinapizans, H. incarnatulum: Hebeloma - Greek for youth and fringe, presumably because some species are veiled or fringed at the cap margin; crustuliniforme - crustulum = a small cake, forma = shape; helodes - from the Greek for a marsh; sinapizans - from the Greek for mustard; incarnatulum = small and flesh coloured.

[By Geoffrey Kibby, originally published in 2000 in the magazine *Field Mycology* volume 1, p. 48.]

Useful references online

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_classification
http://botanicallatin.org/
http://atshq.org/articles/beechwp1.html
http://atshq.org/articles/beechwp2.html