









British Mycological Society promoting fungal science

What are fungi?

-  Mushrooms, bracket fungi, moulds, yeasts and (with algae) lichens
-  12,500 fungi occur in the UK; 4,500 of which are mushrooms
-  200 are edible and only 50 are poisonous
-  New species are continually being discovered
-  Those who study fungi are called 'mycologists'
-  Inedible mushrooms are sometimes called toadstools

Fungi are NOT plants or animals, but a separate Kingdom of organisms









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Fungi as food

-  Fungi are nutritious
-  Twice the protein of most fresh vegetables
-  Few calories (80 in 225 g) and little fat, but best of all, NO cholesterol
-  Good source of fibre, and rich in minerals
-  Contain essential amino acids and vitamins including B₂, niacin and B₁₂
-  Mushrooms offer a huge range of tastes and textures, a delight for the adventurous cook

Fungi are a wholesome food










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Fungi and wildlife

-  Fungi form a crucial part of the food web in most natural habitats
-  Squirrels, mice, voles and deer regularly eat them as a major part of their diets
-  Insects, insect larvae and beetle grubs eat them
-  Millipedes, snails and slugs eat them
-  Fungus-root associations (called mycorrhizas) benefit most plants
-  Without fungi, wood, fallen leaves, and wild life dung would not fully degrade
-  And fungi enable ruminants to extract nutrients from the plants on which they graze

Benefit wildlife – conserve fungi










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Growing mushrooms

-  About 10 species are grown for sale in the UK
-  Commercial mushroom production is high-tech horticulture
-  You can grow your own
-  Mushrooms can be grown indoors from kits
-  Some can be grown on logs in the garden
-  Some can be planted in lawns
-  They can even be grown on rolls of kitchen tissues

YOU could give it a try!










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Fungi as poisoners

-  A few are deadly – learn to recognise and avoid these
-  Some damage red blood cells if eaten raw
-  Some affect mental states
-  Some cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
-  Individuals vary in their reactions
-  Most incidents arise from wrong identifications
-  Microscopic fungi can be poisonous or carcinogenic producing toxins in foodstuffs and animal feeds

Learn to recognise the poisonous species









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Myths about recognising poisonous mushrooms

Are they safe to eat if they:

-  Are eaten by mice and squirrels? **NO**
-  Stay the same colour if bruised? **NO**
-  Change colour when bruised? **NO**
-  Don't "bleed" when cut? **NO**
-  Don't discolour a silver spoon? **NO**
-  Don't have a swollen base? **NO**

**Much mushroom folklore exists
but it is not reliable**

Identify your fungus!










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Enjoying mushrooms safely

-  Look for the many kinds on sale
-  Learn to identify wild mushrooms
-  Collect those with no poisonous look-alikes
-  Cook before eating and remember some don't mix with alcohol
-  Don't collect from roadside or industrial sites (heavy metals can accumulate in mushrooms)
-  Avoid mushrooms containing grubs or with surface moulds
-  Try only a small amount of any mushroom that you've not eaten before

Don't take risks – but enjoy!



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Discovering more about fascinating fungi

-  Join your local fungus group
-  There are over 30 local groups in the UK
-  Local groups have expert-led field days
-  Members include naturalists, photographers, artists and mushroom-eaters
-  Buy yourself one of the well-illustrated field guides

Visit the BMS website
www.britmycolsoc.org.uk



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