

FUNGI IN SCHOOLS

for
CHILDREN
TEACHERS
PARENTS

and other
interested parties



Last time we looked at mushrooms on sale in shops. Do you remember the **gills**. they were pink in the small button and became dark purple-brown in the fully grown mushroom — the one with the flat cap. The gills change colour because they become covered with millions of tiny brown spores. These are so small that you can only see one single spore by using a powerful microscope, but you can easily see lots of spores together.

There are two ways you can try and do this using a flat-topped mushroom with dark brown gills.

1. Cut some small chunks, about 1cm square, very carefully with a knife, or if this is difficult, you can break off some pieces using your fingers. Put them in a jam jar with just enough water to cover them. With one hand over the top, shake the jar and then look at the water — it will change colour as the spores float off the gills into the water. You can see this even better if you pour some of the water from the jam jar into a white saucer.
2. Cut the stem off a fully grown mushroom and put the cap, gill-side down, onto a piece of white or pale-coloured paper, cover with a jam jar or small plastic box and leave overnight. Next morning the spores will have fallen from the gills onto the paper and made a pattern of the gills. This is called a **Spore Print**.

The **Spore Print** opposite was made especially for you at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The man who made it was very annoyed because **Something** walked across it in the night — What, or Who, do you think it was?

You can make very pretty **Spore Prints** by collecting mushrooms and toadstools (which scientists call **Agarics**) in the autumn and arranging them on different coloured papers.

Always wash your hands after touching mushrooms or toadstools and **NEVER** eat them unless you are told it is safe to do so.

Sheila M Francis

Next time: Fungus Forays

