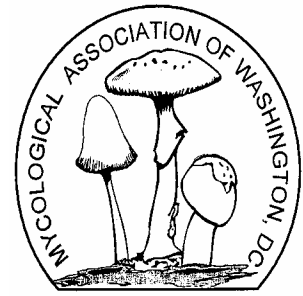


Potomac Sporophore

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FOURTH ANNUAL MAW MUSHROOM FAIR

For the last three years MAW has organized a mushroom fair at Brookside Garden in Wheaton, MD. This year we will be there on October 2nd for the fourth time. We need volunteers to help with the activities of the fair, particularly on the day of the fair. We hope that our members will come to the fair and participate. We will have mushroom identification lectures, forays on the grounds of Brookside Garden and lots of information on growing your own mushrooms and in using mushroom dye. In addition, we will have demonstrations on cooking mushrooms and activities for young children. Please contact Jim Sherry at mjbolete@comcast.net and help with us the activities.

OUR PENNSYLVANIA FORAY

September 16-18

For the 17th time we will foray at Camp Sequanota near Jennerstown, PA. The mushrooms here are usually bountiful. The cost is \$85.00 per adult, double occupancy (single: \$20.00 extra)-this includes 5 meals. Please sign up by September 7. Send checks to MAW c/o Jon Ellifritz 1903 Powhattan Rd. Hyattsville, MD,

NEMF REPORT Jim Sherry

The 11th annual Samuel Ristich Foray (NEMF) was held at Mont Alto, Pennsylvania, which is adjacent to Michaux State Park. The weather was very warm and the land was dry but the group of 200 participants found about 300 species of mushrooms. Maria and I went on two forays and were happy to learn of all the trails in Michaux State Park that we never before forayed on. On our second foray we found a chicken mushroom, a beefsteak milky and a beefsteak polypore, among other mushrooms. The faculty included Gary Lincoff, Tom Volk, John Plischke III, and Walt Sturgeon. Gary Lincoff was to give the main address but could not attend because of illness (we hope that he is well now) so a panel of mycologists took his place and it asked the audience for questions. The first question was, "what is a species," which was appropriate because Gary's address was going to be on the DNA and mushrooms. I think Tom's answer, which was delivered in that diffident and amused manner of his, should put to rest, for the time being, any further deep analysis of this question. He said, basically, that one can define species in any way that one wishes. In other words, nature doesn't make species, we do. Later, I asked him if he thought other animals also recognized species and he said he thought so. (They do have to teach their young ones to avoid certain plants and mushrooms)

This panel also discussed the word, "clade." Clade is defined as a biological group of species with a common evolutionary ancestor. It is used in mushroom nomenclature to list the types of mushrooms that have been identified by DNA analysis as belonging together. For example, a clade has some mushrooms in it that have gills, some with pores, some with teeth, some with crusts, etc. It's an entirely new way of classifying mushrooms. At first these clade arrangements confounded the mycologists, but, according to Dr. Roy Watling, who visited us from Scotland, after studying mushrooms microscopically, mycologists began to see very subtle commonalities among the mushrooms in a particular clade. I later learned that there also were commonalities in the chemistry of the mushrooms in a particular clade. The handout listed eight clades.

This clade business is making some people unhappy because it is classifying mushrooms by characteristics which no one can see with the naked eye.

Dr. Ed Mena spoke about the chemistry of mushrooms. He said that he learned a number of years ago that it was futile to study the chemistry of mushrooms that were grown in a sterile laboratory culture because mushrooms develop their most interesting chemical compounds (potential medicinal drugs) only when they grow in the forest where they are challenged by other organisms for survival. Mushrooms simply do not have the chemistry that he is interested in if they are not growing in a natural environment. Unfortunately, he is not given much money by drug companies to do his research because drug companies do not like to fund research that studies natural

substances - it is difficult to get copyrights.

Dr. Bart Buyck discussed the importance of water in mushroom growth. The mushroom can spring up in a few hours when rain falls on it because it already has formed a primordium which is underground and ready to release itself when the rain comes. Also, an ascomycetes fruiting body can "violently" release its spores because it contains a tremendous amount of water pressure inside its fruiting body and when rain falls (at 20 miles an hour) it releases this pressure and the spores are sprung loose. And the basidiomycetes also use a force that is built up by water pressure to spring loose its spores, though with less gusto. The fruiting bodies of mushrooms have many ways of maintaining water pressure. The ganoderma has a hard, non-porous surface, the woods ear can rehydrate, some polypores attach to trees to drain water from them and the hypomyces parasitizes other mushrooms.

The next NEMF will take place at a hermitage that is located 165 miles north of Quebec City.

THE LOST RIVER FORAY

It's a pleasure to drive down to the Lost River Valley in West Virginia because the roads are fairly level except for the drive over the Great North Mountain-the mountain that divides Virginia from West Virginia- but even that mountain was easy driving because there were no hairpin curves of the type that you encounter when going over the Shenandoah Mt. on the way to Franklin, W. VA. (Lost River refers to the fact that the river by the same name goes underground for two miles and reemerges as the Capon River,

which then flows north into the Potomac).

This year's W.Va. foray was held for the 2nd time at the Lost River Retreat Center. Nineteen adults and two boys attended and we all had a very enjoyable time and had near-perfect weather. The cost for two people was \$190.00, which included five meals and a private bathroom. The setting was remote enough so that there was no need to lock our rooms when we were not using them.

About 100 species were collected, 37 of which were vouched for the first time for Hardy County. Bill Roody, Donna Mitchell, Walt Sturgeon and Jon Ellifritz did the work of identifying the mushrooms. Perhaps some members don't know Walt Sturgeon - he is a well-known mycologist who has written a number of books on mushrooms and was a faculty member at NEMF.

Both Friday and Saturday evenings, after dinner, most of our group sat around a large round table and ate the snacks and drank the wine that the members provided. One of the favorite foods was made by Hilda DeSousa- a dip which was so delicious that we asked her to share the recipe, which follows at the end. All of the wine was enjoyed and as more of it was consumed, we became a merry group.

We found some *Laetiporus sulphureus* or chicken mushroom, which Jin Ellifritz prepared as a chicken satay on a skewer. It was a lot of work for Jon but it was worth it; for it was delicious. And it proved that you can sometimes consume almost all of the *sulphureus* and not just the margin, as was reported here in the last issue.

Bill Roody gave a lecture/slide presentation on the boletes that grow in conifer woods and put

particular emphasis on the characteristics of the stem of the bolete because some boletes have many identifying characteristics on the stem, which help to recognize the species.

He also made the point, which I think is a good one, that a helpful way of learning to identify mushrooms is to concentrate on one group of mushrooms at a time and then go on to another group. In the last issue of the Potomac Sporophore we published the names of mushrooms that were popular with MAW members and which were likely to be found in our area-this group would be a good learning start.

Hilda's recipe: 15 oz. artichokes, 8 oz. cream cheese, 4 oz. mozzarella, ¼ cup mayo, ¼ tsp. garlic, 1 cup parmesan cheese. Also, Catherine had a great hummus. J.Sherry

Report of NAMA Board of Trustees Meeting, July 20, 2005

1. The 2006 and 2007 Annual Forays have been scheduled. These and the LaCrosse foray are organized and sponsored by NAMA, without a host club: August 16 – 20, 2006 Venturescape, Hinton, Alberta, Canada about 2 ½ hrs. from Edmonton August 13 – 19, 2007 Pipestem Resort State Park, West Virginia about 1 hr. south of Beckley
2. The budget for FY 2006 of \$63,450 was unanimously approved. Membership is up about 2% from last year and all committees are being led by committed, active Chairs.
3. The Endowment fund has been established with \$17,696 to fund scholarship awards.

It will continue to be funded by 10% of annual operating surplus and is accepting donations.

4. The NAMA Education Committee has established a link with the National "Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) Consortium" who has accepted 24 pages of the education section of NAMA's website at www.thegateway.org.
5. A Policy Statement NAMA's ROLE IN EDUCATION FOR AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL MYCOLOGISTS was reviewed and adopted.
6. A NAMA endorsement of the Gulf States Regional Foray in St. Francisville, LA on December 2 – 4, 2005 for \$300 for a professional mycologist was approved.

These are the major issues of general interest that were discussed at the Trustees meeting attended by Paul Goland and myself. Other items of interest at the Foray were: Attendance was more than 175 persons and although it had not rained in the area for the previous month, 300+ species were collected and identified along with between 30 and 50 species of lichens (it did rain the mornings of July 20, 21 and 22). Tom Volk was awarded the NAMA Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology. Ursula Pohl of the New Jersey Mycological Society was elected Region II Trustee – Please give her the same strong support that you gave me. I have certainly enjoyed serving as your Regional Trustee for the last three years. If you would like additional details about other specific issues

discussed at the Trustees Meeting or in committee reports for the year, please contact me, Bruce Boyer at bboyer@spotsylvania.va.us

My Take on Hen of the Woods (aka... maitake, Grifola frondosa)

Ray LaSala

Hen of the Woods appears from September through November at the base of old oak trees as a basketball-sized mass of branching brown and tan fronds, sometimes 25 lbs. or more surrounding a single tree. It is often found in the same habitats as Chicken of the Woods. A member of the polypore family, it produces its spores from cream-colored tubes and pores, not gills, on the underside of the fruiting body.

Like most wild mushrooms, Hen of the Woods must be cooked before serving. Do not eat it raw. This mushroom is very durable and will keep a week or more refrigerated in a paper bag that is in turn put in a plastic bag or tub. It can be preserved for future use by steaming it in a little bit of plain water and then freezing it. When sliced crosswise into thin (1/8") wafers, it dries very well, and even has a nice texture when reconstituted– particularly the massive base which might otherwise not be used.

Clean it thoroughly by giving the pieces a good bath in several changes of cold water, then drying it in a salad spinner or with paper towels. Unlike gilled mushrooms, it will not become waterlogged and will actually refresh if treated this way. It is much easier and more interesting to simply break it into pieces with your fingers rather than cut it up with a knife (The pieces end up irregularly shaped

with nice jagged edges that brown beautifully). However, if the mushroom is very fresh, you might want to wear rubber gloves when handling it this way, because the juice from it can cause your skin to dry out and crack.

It is reputed to have medicinal properties and makes a nice mushroom tea (See recipe below).

A relatively strong-flavored mushroom, try it in any of the following preparations:

- 1) Sautéed in olive oil with minced garlic, salt, and pepper until it browns around the edges. Interesting variations: add caramelized (pan-roasted until browned) cauliflower and rosemary to the above; or lightly sauté in vegetable oil, then braise with cabbage, onions, a little thyme, and a splash of white wine.
- 2) Used as the featured ingredient in a New England (cream-based) chowder (Clam of the Woods??)
- 3) Italian style (“Sott’olio”): Pickled, stored under olive oil, served at room temperature.
- 4) Mixed in with cooked lentils and used as a base for roasted fish, tofu, or puffball.
- 5) Thin dehydrated slices simmered in water with carrot, onion, leek, garlic, celery, parsley, thyme, and bay leaf, then strained to make a rich mushroom stock. To make a mushroom consommé, fish out the mushroom slices and put them back into the stock; discard the other solids and replace them with fresh shredded carrot, celery, white part of leek, chervil, tarragon and dill. Or just simmer in plain water to make a tea.

- Ray LaSala

The Mushroom Chronicles Pharmacopoeia

Wm. Needham

Fungi do not make their own food. They rely on plants for sustenance, a characteristic they share with animals such as humans. Paul Stamets, in the book *Mycomedicinals*, offers that this is because "we shared a common ancestor more than 460 million years ago." When one considers that this was shortly after the Cambrian explosion when many life forms literally appeared overnight (from the geological perspective) and many early phyla were represented by a single organism, this is not as outlandish as it sounds. If it hasn't already, DNA evidence will undoubtedly demonstrate that this relationship can be genetically proven. The point of asserting this verisimilitude is that if fungi are similar to animals and have had to compete in a world governed by survival of the fittest, then those that have survived have done so by evolving the means to ward off predators. This would include things like microbes and viruses that also prey on animals. According to this logic, fungi should be a rich source of proven chemical combinations that ward off pathogens.

Homo sapiens have had to cope with insidious diseases throughout our shared history of some five million years. Drug therapy from naturally occurring substances was most assuredly a matter of serendipity. Through the ages, the lore of folk medicine was passed down through tribes and clans as the purview of the shamans of Asia and the medicine men of the Americas. It is well documented that Native Americans used plants for treatments of everything from menstrual cramps

(spicebush) to sore throat (bloodroot). Their use of fungi is less well known, though there is evidence for the treatment of joint pain and congested organs. The only well documented use of fungi by Native Americans was as a styptic for the topical treatment of wounds. The manner in which it was applied attends to the caricature of the hardened warrior, as the fungi (typically a polypore like tinder fungus) was applied to the place affected and then set alight to burn the skin over the area of the wound. This practice was also common in China, perhaps an indication of the origins of the Native American peoples.

Fungi were also used by the early Europeans. In 1991, a Neolithic man was discovered in the Italian Alps when he emerged from ice in which he had been frozen since his death about 5,300 years ago. Named Oetzi for the Italian region in which he lived, he carried a thong with several pieces of Birch Polypore, *Polyporus betulinus*, threaded on it. Speculation is that he carried it as an antibiotic medicine, for it is now known that *P. betulinus* contains an antibiotic that acts on bacteria, resins that attack whipworms (an intestinal parasite), and agaric acid which is a carminative (causing gas to be expelled from the intestines). In that an autopsy revealed that Oetzi had worms, it is likely that this was his palliative. He also carried *Fomes fomentarius*, the tinder fungus; an essential for any alpine trekker in the winter. The tinder fungus, also called Amadou, was used both as a means to start a fire from a spark and as a way to transport an ember from one campfire to another. Remnants of fungal material fabricated in this manner have been found at Upper Paleolithic hominid sites dating back to 11,600 BCE. The tinder fungus was also an acknowledged

curative, as the Greek Hippocrates identified it as a topical treatment for wounds over 4,000 years ago.

It is not clear why fungi never made the transition from evidently well known and practiced ancient herbalism to modern folk remedies to the extent that plants have. Historically, the identification of medicinals became a matter of the written record, necessary in order to identify the source, the manner of preparation, and the appropriate dosage for the given ailment. These listings of drugs are called pharmacopoeias; The Greek physician Dioscorides compiled one of the first pharmacopoeias called *Materia Medica* in 65 CE. In this book, one fungus, the "Agarikon Fungus" which most likely refers to the *Fomitopsis officinalis*, was listed as a panacea for ailments ranging from kidney disease to epilepsy. The Agarikon was a staple of pharmacology until at least the 18th Century, when it fell into obscurity. This is at least in part due to fact that Carolus Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy, gave the generic name *Agaricus* to a group of gilled mushrooms, of which the pedestrian, supermarket button mushroom (*Agaricus bisporus*) is a member. The United States Pharmacopoeia appeared in 1820 and the International Pharmacopoeia was established by the World Health Organization in 1951.

It should come as no surprise that mushrooms, or more properly fungi, have proven as well as potential medicinal attributes. In 1928, Sir Alexander Fleming discovered that the spread of the ubiquitous pus producing bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus* (it is gold or aurum in color) was arrested by a green mold. The organism that produced the substance was a species of *Penicillium*, so he named it penicillin. This marked the

beginning of the antibiotic era. It wasn't until the advent of World War II that a way of producing large quantities of the new "miracle drug" was developed. The rest of the story is that *Penicillium* is the genus of about 250 species of blue or green mold fungi. Interestingly, the name *Penicillium*, and hence penicillin, has the same etymology as pencil, as the ends of the mold's conidiophores are tufted, like an artist's brush from which the modern pencil is derived. So the first miracle drug was a fungus.

Of the approximately 15,000 species of mushrooms, it is estimated that about five percent are utilized for medicinal purposes somewhere in the world. There are currently more than 250 species that are known to have therapeutic properties based on accepted clinical research. The primary medicinal agents in fungi are polysaccharides, which generally act against cancers and enhance the body's immune response. The healing and curative properties of fungi have been recognized and used for medicinal purposes in China and Japan for millennia. The earliest known pharmacopoeia in China (100 CE), Shen Noug Pen Ts'ao Jing, lists a number of mushrooms with medicinal applications. They have gained even greater import in the modern era as the fungi can in many cases be cultivated. The traditionalist medicine of the East has captured the imagination of the medical conservancy of the West. Acupuncture is one example. Fungi are and in all likelihood will continue to penetrate the pharmacopoeia of the general practitioner. Three examples will suffice to demonstrate the potential for modern medical treatments: The *Trametes versicolor* or Turkey Tail, the *Ganoderma lucidum*, or Varnish Conk, and the *Lentinula*

edodes, or Shiitake.

Turkey Tail, known as Yun Zhi or "cloud mushroom" in China, is probably the most thoroughly studied of the medicinal fungi, as it is among the most widely used in East Asian medicines. In traditional Chinese herbalism, the fruit bodies are harvested and ground to a powder to make a tea that was used to reduce phlegm, treat pulmonary maladies, and promote a healthy liver. The Ming dynasty version of the pharmacopoeia provides that if the Yun Zhi is taken over a long period of time, "it will make one vigorous and live long." In the modern era, *T. versicolor* derived protein-bound polysaccharide (PSK) has been shown clinically to be effective against human cancers, particularly when used in combination with other agents. A 1982 study of cervical cancer patients given PSK with radiation found that the 3 year survival rate was 85 percent compared to 59 percent for those given radiation without PSK.

Ganoderma lucidum is known in China as Ling Zhi which means mushroom of immortality. The Latin name *lucidum* refers to the coruscating, varnish-like shine of the fruiting body when it first emerges from the side of a tree. It has been used in Chinese and Japanese folk medicine for at least four millennia in the treatment of age related maladies such as heart disease, hypertension, and chronic bronchitis so as to increase longevity. It was considered so powerful that it was used as a talisman to protect individuals and homes from evil spirits. In the last 30 years, it has been used in numerous human clinical studies to treat insomnia, duodenal ulcers, progressive muscular dystrophy, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease. It's efficacy in treating bronchitis was demonstrated in the 1970's

when 75 percent of 2,000 patients showed marked improvement after two weeks of therapy.

Shiitake mushrooms are named for their association with the Asian shiia tree; the Latin species name *edodes* refers to their edibility. They grow wild in Japan and China but are not indigenous to North America, their widespread availability due to facile cultivation. They are second only to the *Agaricus bisporus* in commercial production. The two most important medicinal derivatives or the Shiitake are LEM (*Lentinula edodes* mycelium extract) and lentinan. Both chemicals have strong anti-tumor properties by enhancing the body's immune system rather than attacking the cancer directly. There have been innumerable clinical trials of the shiitake. For example, a controlled trial of 275 patients with advanced gastric cancer showed that those given lentinan with chemotherapy had statistically improved longevity and improved immune response. A group of Japanese women who ate 90 grams of shiitake mushrooms daily for one week had a 12 percent drop in serum cholesterol.

Fungus as pharmaceutical is a bit antithetical to the prevailing wisdom that wild mushrooms are deadly toadstools. Few stop to consider the source of penicillin, even as it established the idea of "miracle drug" that we have come to expect whenever we are sick. But tastes change as time proceeds. Instead of taking two aspirin and going to bed, perhaps in the future you may sit down to a meal of shiitakes with a turkey tail on the side.

FALL MUSHROOMS

Jon Ellifritz

Fall is the season for the greatest number of mushroom species in

our area, especially when rainfall and temperatures are at their optimum (measured by the Goldilocks standard -- not too dry and not too wet, not too hot and not too cold; ju-u-u-st right!). Many fall mushrooms are choice edibles, but almost every kind of fungus except morels can come up in abundance. Two of us found about 50 species in one afternoon, after an August drought was succeeded by one drenching early September rain (slow and gentle, not a cloudburst), followed by another a week later. And we found at least 260 species at one September Camp Sequanota weekend in Pennsylvania.

In September, the smooth, golden, and red chanterelles of summer gradually disappear, although black trumpets linger on. Damp oak and beech woods are the best place to find all of these. Hedgehogs, comparable to chanterelles in their firm texture and the esteem in which they're held by many, can also be found near beech, but can sometimes be found in great abundance in mountain laurel gullies in scrub pine woods.

In addition to chanterelles and hedgehogs, other mycorrhizal fungi, most often associated with oaks or conifers in our area, come into their own from September on. Members of the genera *Amanita*, *Boletus*, *Lactarius*, and *Russula* make their first appearances at the beginning of summer and continue through the fall, although the specific players change. They're joined in the fall by *Cortinarii*, like *Amanitas* more treasured for their colors and beauty than their edibility. Best to avoid both genera for the table, unless you're certain about your identification of a few good *Amanitas*, since there are a number of deadly species in both.

With *Lactarius* and *Russula*, the good to choice species are greatly outnumbered by the merely edible to inedible to somewhat toxic ones. But the choice *Lactarius volemus* and *L. hygrophoroides* are succeeded in late August to September by the even choicer (in my opinion) *L. corrugis*, called the milky beefsteak by local mushroom hunters in southern Pennsylvania. Again, they're found mainly in oak woods. Treat them like filet mignon, wrapped in bacon and broiled, for a simple yet delectable treat. As for *Russulas*, one day I may get around to trying some of the several green species, which others have tried and liked, and I hope to find and identify the shrimp-tasting *Russula* (*R. xerampelina*) some day, although wading through any number of the 60 or so other reddish *Russula* species found in the Northeast seems a bit daunting.

In fall, the number of *Boletus* species tends to drop off, although one year we found about 20 pounds of *Boletus bicolor* and *Boletus/Xanthoconium separans* at the September Sequanota weekend. They provided an excellent addition to our Saturday evening meal. But beware the bicolor! I avoided it for years because I wasn't sure I could distinguish it from *B. sensibilis*, a poisonous look-alike. Both bruise blue, but at different rates on different parts of the mushroom. Bill Roody, far more expert than I, won't eat it because of the incompleteness of knowledge about bicolor and other, similar boletes. At the recent NEMF foray, Walt Sturgeon picked up one of the three "bicolors" I had set on a plate with a tentative identification. After sniffing it, he said it had the fruity aroma of *sensibilis* and put it on another plate! If you use the rule of avoiding all boletes that bruise

blue unless you have a definite, certain identification, you'll be able to avoid the discomfort of "gastrointestinal distress" that can result from eating the wrong one. More prominent among boletes in the fall are species of *Suillus* and *Leccinum*. Unless I've had them prepared by someone else, though, I haven't tried either, mainly because I've never found more than one or two small *Leccinums* at one time, and never been inspired enough to peel off the cap skin and tube layers as recommended for several kinds of *Suillus*.

Among the edible polypores, three varieties stand out. Chicken of the woods, both *Laetiporus sulphureus* and *L. cincinnatus*, start fruiting in May but can be found into October. Hen of the woods, considered much more desirable by some, whether for food or medicine, flourishes from mid-September through October, generally at the foot of large old oaks, whether dead or alive. The beefsteak polypore, *Fistulina hepatica*, is the third, and is one of the few wild mushrooms whose consumption raw has been recommended. It usually grows on standing dead trees or stumps, although it's occasionally found on a living tree.

We also can't forget at least two members of the genus *Agaricus*, the meadow mushroom and horse mushroom, both found in grass, or shaggy manes (*Coprinus comatus*, delicious in omelets), which show up in grass or along woodland paths after the first cold rains of autumn. Or the honey mushrooms, from mid-August into October or later, along with their victims (or victimizers?), *Entoloma abortivum*, whose aborted form used to be thought of as parasitized by honey mushrooms but may actually be honeys parasitized by the

Entoloma. Just be sure to cook them well since insufficiently cooked honeys have caused problems for many.

Finally, two choice fall mushrooms which can appear later than most, sometimes into December: blewits (*Clitocybe/Lepista nuda*) and lion's mane/bearded tooth/pom pom (*Hericium erinaceus*). Blewits come up in thick leaf duff or leaf piles or in the fallen bark at the foot of dead trees or alongside fallen tree trunks. Don't confuse them with *Cortinarius alboviolaceus*, which, while "edible," has a musty, unpleasant flavor and some deadly relatives, or with a less purple or blue, more buff-colored look-alike which may or may not be *Clitocybe irina*. Lion's mane or bearded tooth usually grows on dead logs but occasionally high up in a tree. They're the number one favorites of some mycophagists, at least until they start turning yellow and acquire a sour or bitter taste.

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Autumn in the Woods

Jim Sherry

As Jon said, the fall is the best time to find mushrooms, well, actually, he said that one finds the greatest number of mushrooms in the fall. I find lots of the mushrooms that I like in the fall.

Ray LaSala reported on hen of the woods and I would like to add that I have found most of my hen under scarlet oak trees. Look for the tree that has 'ski trails' going up its bark, as the tree expert at NEMF said, or, as I say, the bark that reminds one of a prison uniform seen in 1930 movies. Actually the groove on some red oak trunks is spread out and takes on a silverish color, which gives the effects described above.

The scarlet oak can also be identified by its acorn, which has circles around its tip - again, the tree expert, but I don't see any acorns on my oak tress. Maria says that the greatest amount of acorns that she has ever seen on the oaks here came during a drought. Can it be that trees are as smart as mushrooms. After all, we have had lots of rain over the past three years so the oaks may not have 'felt' a need to reproduce.

And remember to look for the pleurotus on trees that are located near or on streams. The fall pleurotus is better-tasting than its summer variety and is often found on dead tulip poplars. It's a choice mushroom but it's surprising to learn how many people dislike it.

Also, don't forget the giant puffball; it grows on grass/ leaves.

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