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Mushrooms of Ontario

Many more people are collecting and eating wild mushrooms today than they did a decade ago, either because of increasing food prices or because of the tendency toward the use of natural or "health" foods. In fact, the mushroom is not a distinguished health food. Moreover, a sufficient number of poisonous forms exist that collecting should be done with care. A mistake can have uncomfortable or tragic consequences. Read an article in the October 1975 ONTARIO NATURALIST by Professor John Morgan-Jones of the University of Toronto for more specific information. This issue, available at most public libraries, contains other good articles about mushrooms as well.

If you are a newcomer to mushroom collecting, the following suggestions may be of help:

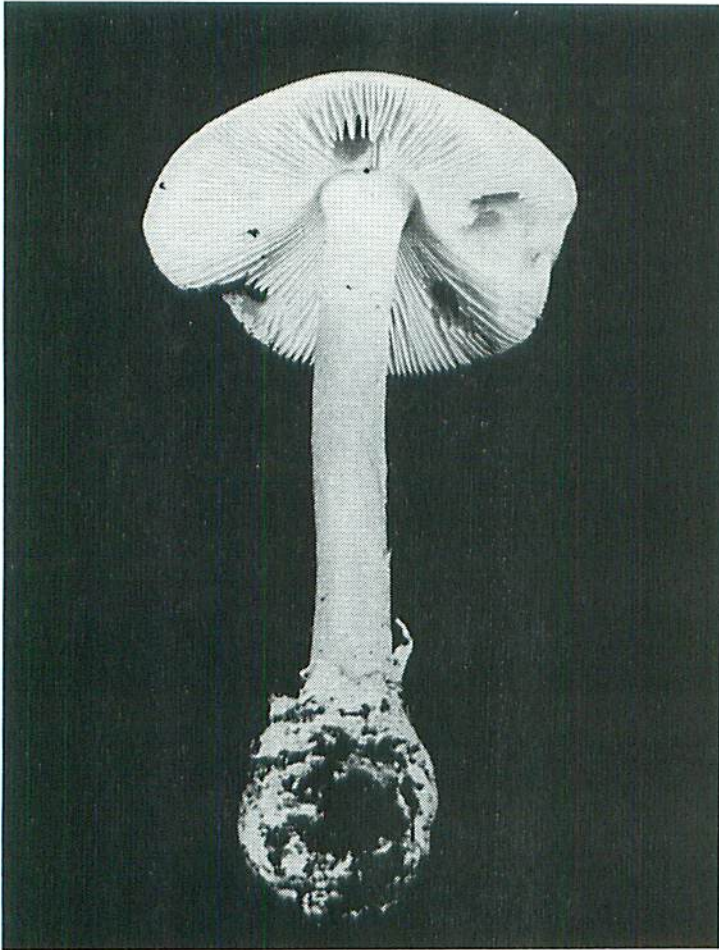
1. There are no simple tests to tell you which mushrooms are poisonous and which are not. Buy a good, simple collector's book, such as Smith's THE MUSHROOM HUNTER'S FIELD GUIDE or Christensen's COMMON FLESHY FUNGI. After a bit of experience, have a look at Groves' EDIBLE AND POISONOUS MUSHROOMS OF CANADA. Read and study your book this winter and be prepared to look for a few easily recognized types of mushrooms next year.
2. Begin collecting early in the day. Remove the caps from one or two of each kind of mushroom to be identified, place top-side up on white paper and cover with a teacup. Spores will fall upon the paper, and their color is



Shaggy Manes

important for identification. Try to identify them with the aid of your book as soon as spores are visible on the paper. Cool the rest of the collection as soon as you return home.

3. If you cannot identify a particular kind, *throw it away*. There is enough poison in one of the deadly *Amanitas* to kill dozens of people.



Destroying Angel

Now, consider what to collect, but with careful reference to your mushroom book. In the spring, search for the choice MOREL in Ontario. It is the first mushroom to appear in many places. But check your book first for a description of the FALSE MOREL which is similar in appearance and may cause you to become ill.

The GIANT PUFFBALL appears about midsummer; it is distinguished by its off-white color, its more or less round shape, and its size: it ranges from several centimetres to two thirds of a metre in diameter. It may be sliced and fried in butter so long as the flesh is white and firm.

From late summer to early autumn you will find MEADOW MUSHROOMS on lawns and in parks. Look for pink gills (thin membranes radiating outward from the stem) under the cap. Though not all white-gilled mushrooms are poisonous, the DESTROYING ANGEL (*Amanita virosa*) is quite deadly, so it's best to avoid all the white-gilled mushrooms.

The SHAGGY MANES and INKY CAPS are easy to recognize, but do not eat them after the bottom of the cap begins to turn purple. And check your book for the fall woods' mushrooms, such as the HONEY or STUMP MUSHROOM (*Armillaria mellea*) and SULPHUR BRACKET (*Lateiporus sulphureus*). Enjoy yourself, but take care!

C.E. Dorworth

Copies of this leaflet can be obtained from the Centre's Information Office.

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