

## Gardening Tips

By Marie Vassallo

### Mushrooms!

It has been an amazing mushroom season this autumn, with the fungi world really putting on a grand display. Fungi are nature's recyclers - they break down complex chemicals, such as the long polysaccharides found in leaves and other plant debris, into simpler ones which are nutrients for new plants and animals



Most people don't realise that mushrooms are not a singular organism, but they have a web of mycelium that spreads out under the top layer of soil. When conditions are right, usually after it rains, the fungus will begin to produce a mushroom so that it can reproduce. Mushrooms come in many shapes and sizes, but the main feature is that they produce and protect spores, which are the fungus's reproductive cells. Fungi have many different kinds of spores, but most are released into the air, where they float until they land on new soil. Some spores are asexual and produce another fungus immediately, others are sexual (haploid) and produce a body which makes gametes

and must find another fungus's spore. Regardless, once a fungus has reproduced it forms a new mycelium underground. <https://www.quora.com/When-and-how-do-mushrooms-grow-in-the-wild>

Many mushrooms are tiny - these ones I photographed in May at Shepards Bush in South Eastern Melbourne are only about 5mm across. (*Hypoloma fasciculare*)

There are native fungi that grow bigger than your hand, some are spindly fingers, others toadstool shaped

Some are phosphorescent and glow in the dark! They are often referred to as "ghost mushrooms" The Otways have many varieties of these. I am yet to be lucky enough to spot one at the right time of day.

Its hard not to love these "fairy" mushrooms. I believe our Deputy State President had a ring of these in her front lawn! *Amanita muscaria* and are **poisonous to eat** but beautiful to look at. They like damp conditions and are usually found under deciduous trees.

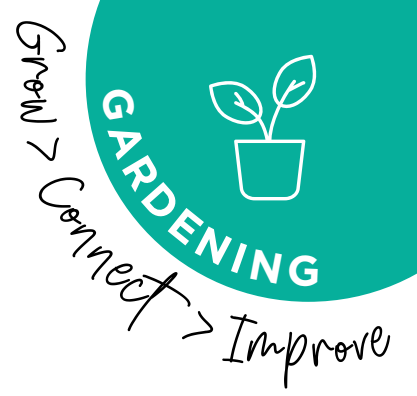
There are many websites and facebook groups that provide lots of advice and help with identification. <https://allcreativedesigns.com.au/pages/gallfungi.html> or Victorian fungi <https://www.facebook.com/groups/154744888028215/>





## Week Six

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In my mushroom adventures I witness many people collecting mushrooms, believing them to be edible. The VAST majority of mushrooms found in Victoria are NOT edible. Despite many years of interest in this wonderful aspect of flora, the only mushrooms I eat come from the greengrocer! It is not worth the risk with ending up in hospital very unwell, or worse. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/news-and-events/healthalerts/poisonous-mushrooms-growing-in-melbourne-2020-12/5/2020>

Next time you are out for your “iso walk” take the time to focus on the little things – you may well be very pleasantly surprised!