
Think about the legality of where you want to pick

Depending on where you live, it might be difficult to find land where foraging is allowed. You can try to find private land owners willing to share their spot, or you can visit public lands. **Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)** allow non-commercial picking. Some lands don't allow visitors to step **off trails**. Some parks require a foraging **permit**.

Be respectful of nature and think about tomorrow's foragers

Pick only what you need. Do not pick blindly "just in case it's edible". Take a few young and fresh mushrooms and come back later when you know which species they are. Even if we pick most mushrooms in a patch, the mycelium will produce more year after year if the conditions are right. However, on the long run there will be less spores released for reproduction. Keep in mind that the mushrooms also depend on the preservation of their habitat and host trees.

Photo tips for online identification

Take pictures of the **whole mushroom**. This includes the **top and under cap**, as well as the **foot**, including its **base**. Cut the mushroom on its long side and take a picture of the **inside**. Ideally, the pictures should be taken under **natural light** (outdoors). Take notes on the **habitat** where you found it. Did it grow on the ground or on wood?

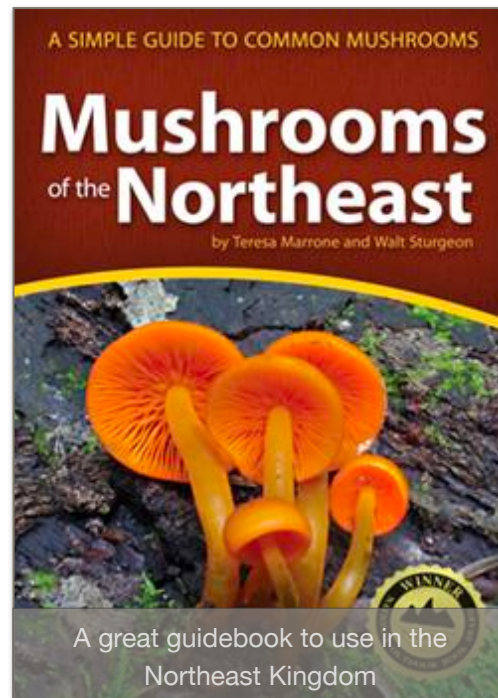
Resources for starters

Nothing beats learning from a mentor.

Try to connect with local foragers and mycologists for in-person learning. Find a club, or start one! Get yourself a **guidebook** and read it carefully. That way, you'll know **what to look for** when you do get out to forage. Look at a lot of pictures of the species you're hoping to find, and study their habitat so you know **where to look** for them.

There are also many free online resources.

iNaturalist.org is a website that can help you learn about all species you encounter in nature. You can upload your pictures and have experts help you identify your finds. Be mindful that not everybody is an expert and **never eat a mushroom you cannot confidently identify yourself**.



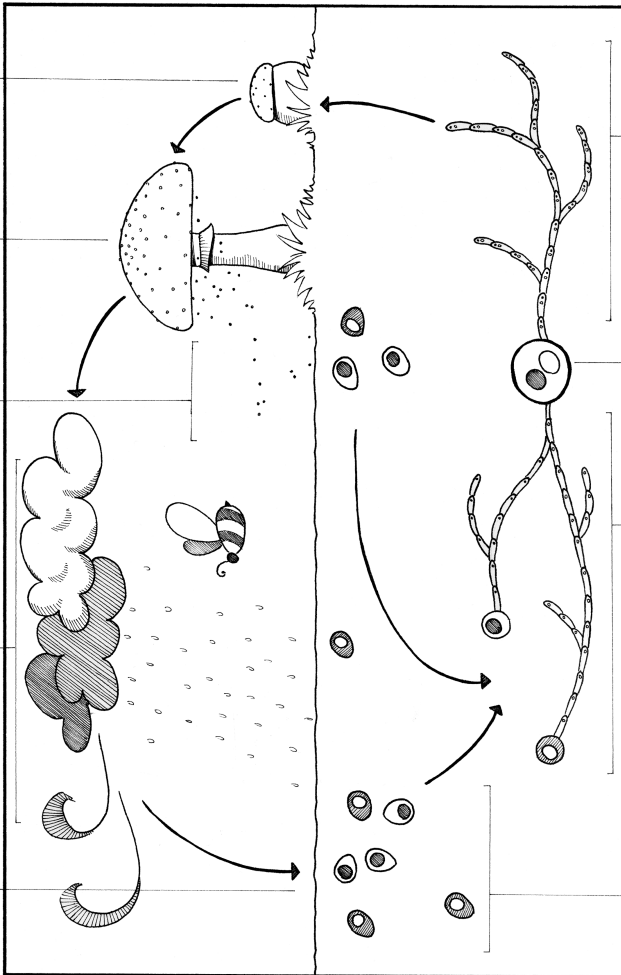
The Essentials of Wild Mushroom Foraging

A few important facts to get you started

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Fungi are neither plants nor animals



The visible part is like a fruit.
The rest of the organism is called the mycelium.

They are essential to decomposition and the cycle of nutrients. They are the only organisms able to degrade wood. They can also degrade diesel and hydrocarbons and help depollute the planet. Some can even thrive with nuclear radiation!

Some live in symbiosis with trees

The mycelium acts like an extension to the trees' roots. They can reach more water and nutrients and provide it to the forest. In return, the trees feed the mycelium.

They connect soil and plants

The mycelium network connects the trees together. It distributes through the forest the energy the trees produce. It can take or give depending on the each tree's needs.



There are many deadly or toxic species

A beginner must **avoid foraging for white mushrooms** because of the confusion risks with deadly species. There is no shortcut to decide whether a mushroom is edible or not. For instance, many people believe a mushroom is edible if a slug or insects are feeding on it. This is completely false!

It is never dangerous to touch or smell a mushroom. Their smells are very diverse and actually quite interesting (chlorine, bitter almond, soap...). The texture and smell are often important to correctly identify which species they are.

In the Northeast Kingdom, the bulk of the season is mid-July to early October

It is advised to look for mushrooms a few days after a good rain.

Morels grow in May

They are very popular but can be difficult to find, especially in the NEK. They have a toxic lookalike : the Gyromitra (false-morel).



Chanterelles are delicious, common and easy to identify for the beginner forager

Just beware of its toxic twin, the **Jack-o-Lantern!** Chanterelles grow between July and September, **always on the ground**, never on wood. The undercap is made out of **fold**s, not gills. When starting, it can be tricky to spot the difference.

Before thinking about eating them, it is highly recommended that you confirm the identity of your mushrooms with an experienced and trustworthy mycologist. The decision (and responsibility) to eat or not a mushroom is always yours.

When in doubt throw it out!