

Source: <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-growing-in-my-landscape-mulch-mushrooms-slime-molds-and-fungus>

What do artillery fungi look like?

They resemble a tiny, cream or orange-brown cup with one black egg. The cup is approximately $\frac{1}{10}$ inch in diameter. Areas of mulch with artillery fungi may appear matted and lighter in color than the surrounding mulch. Are they a problem? They may be a problem. The fruiting body of this fungus orients itself toward bright surfaces, such as light-colored houses or parked automobiles. The artillery fungus "shoots" its black, sticky spore mass, which can be windblown as high as the second story of a house. The spore mass sticks to the side of a building or automobile, resembling a small speck of tar. You may also find them on the undersides of leaves on plants growing in mulched areas. Once in place, the spore mass is very difficult to remove without damaging the surface to which it is attached. If removed, it leaves a stain. A few of these spots are barely noticeable, but as they accumulate, they may become very unsightly on houses or cars.



Fruiting bodies of the artillery fungus

Artillery fungus spore masses on vinyl siding

What can be done?

Penn State researchers have discovered that blending 40 percent used mushroom compost with landscape mulch greatly suppresses the artillery fungus. Mushroom compost, or mushroom soil, is the pasteurized material on which mushrooms are grown. After the final crops of mushrooms are picked, the used compost is pasteurized a second time and removed from the mushroom house. This valuable by-product (sometimes called "black gold") is often made available to gardeners and homeowners. Used mushroom compost has physical and chemical characteristics that make it ideal for blending with landscape mulch to enhance growth of horticultural plants. In addition, mushroom compost contains beneficial microbes that compete with, or actually destroy, nuisance fungi such as the artillery fungus and bird's nest fungi. Homeowners are increasingly interested in controlling nuisance fungi without the use of chemicals. Blending used mushroom compost with landscape mulch offers a "green" and environmentally friendly solution to reducing the harmful effects of the artillery fungus.

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