

Collecting Mushrooms for the Wild Mushroom Show

The biggest thing the Northwest Mushroomers Association does each year is to put on the Wild Mushroom Show. This is an event where the club excels at its purposes "to encourage and develop the understanding of mycology" and "to promote an educated approach toward the collection and consumption of edible mushrooms."

We encourage all of our members to actively help with this show. You do not need to know anything about mushrooms, and you will have fun and know more about mushrooms after the show than you know now.

We ask that you find, collect and bring in specimens for the show. We also encourage you to help set up and run the show in ways shown on the sign up sheets that are being passed around, and to participate in the potluck dinner after the show and cleanup.

Here are some tips on collecting mushrooms to be displayed at the show.

- 1. BRING IN ONLY WHOLE SPECIMENS IN PRISTINE CONDITION.** This is not collecting for edibles where mushrooms are cut at the base to keep dirt from getting into the basket. Collect ALL of the mushroom, including the base. The base of the mushroom is often needed for identification.
- 2. Include a VERY SMALL amount of substrate around the specimen.** The substrate may help with identification and can be as simple as a cone, leaf, or other recognizable part of the plant associated with the mushroom. For mushrooms growing on wood, a note as to type of wood, hardwood or conifer, including species if known, helps. An attached layer of moss can help protect delicacies like mycenae. Sometimes a small garden trowel helps in gathering show specimens, or dig around with a sharp knife. Pruners are handy if you need to cut off excess material on branches or other wood.
- 3. Individually protect each mushroom (or group of small mushrooms).** There are many methods. Each of these works in some cases and occasionally more than one method must be employed to keep a mushroom in good condition.
 - A. Nest in aluminum foil
 - B. Put specimen in wax paper sandwich bag
 - C. Put mushroom or wrapped mushroom in clamshell take-out container
 - D. Include some nearby moss to bed (protect) small mycenae and keep them from drying out.
 - E. Hold Amanitas upright in cut off plastic one liter bottles or milk cartons, otherwise they bend their caps up, orienting to gravity, and consequently look strangely warped when displayed.

4. PUT ONLY ONE SPECIES PER CONTAINER. If possible, include specimens of different ages, up to half dozen specimens of larger things up to a dozen or so of the smaller ones. Do not include moldy, rotten, or wormy specimens unless they are so interesting they can be part of a moldy mushroom display. I.D. to genus or species and add a label if you feel comfortable with it. If you find something really unusual or interesting, include a note with your name and habitat collected in. Try to make your packages so a sorter can see the specimen and move it, doing the initial sorting, while the mushroom is still in its protective wrapping. Bringing in a box or bag with a dozen species of mushrooms squished in the bottom makes it hard on everyone.

5. Don't go far from your car when collecting. Bring specimens back to your car before your basket gets crowded and mushrooms start getting mashed. Keep specimens protected in cardboard boxes or totes while in your car.

6. Storing display mushrooms: Specimens of many (not all) mushrooms can be stored in a cool, humid place for several days. You can collect specimens as early as Wednesday if you take very good care of them; collect only on Saturday if you do not. Do not store mushrooms in sealed plastic containers because they quickly get moldy.

Accept the challenge of getting mushroom specimens in perfect condition to the Pavillion behind the Bloedel Donovan Field House on **Saturday, October 18, after 5:00 pm**. Pretend you are working professionally to bring specimens to a museum. In every way regarding education, you are: with the main difference being that you are getting paid in fun and knowledge, not money.

I have a ball with this. This is a great excuse for me to do four consecutive days of field trips with my eyes wide open. We live in a beautiful, fascinating part of the world, and this gets me out to see and appreciate it.

- Chuck Nafziger, NMA president, 9/14