



## FORAGING MUSHROOMS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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*Presented by: Connie Wurm*

### **MUSHROOM FORAGING RULES:**

- Never eat wild food within 50 feet of a road (petroleum residue)
- Never take all the mushrooms/greens/etc. - leave some for animals and health of the plant/mushroom/etc. to recover.
- Know the look-a-likes and poisonous mushrooms (100% accuracy is a must) “There are old mushroom hunters and bold mushroom hunters but NO bold, old mushroom hunters”. Join Puget Sound Mycological Society (PSMS), take a class, go on a foray with an expert.
- Never enter private property without permission
- Know the State and Federal rules for foraging.
  - Never enter private property without permission
  - Non-commercial harvest on State property limits mushrooms to 5 gal each
  - State Wildlife areas. DFW allow mushroom, berry picking or personal use
  - State Tidelands require license to harvest seafood, including seaweed and this is limited to a seasonal timeframe.
  - State Parks allow personal use except in “natural area preserves”
  - National Forests - allowed but limited to 1 gal mushrooms/berries
  - National Parks you need to get permission
  - Some areas will post restrictions. You need to follow these or be fined.
  - These rules vary for WA, Oregon, Alaska and California.

### **HIKING SAFETY RULES:**

- If possible, it is best to go with someone who is experienced.
- Know the terrain. (Example: Banner Forest: 1.5 miles across, 635 acres, 29 miles of trails. ([see map](#))). Go on-line to see if a map exists of the area you wish to forage and print the map.
- Stay together. Our group take whistles, fully charged cell phones, compass.
- Don't hike alone or after dark, plan ahead for emergencies.
- Water, water, water. First aid kit is a good idea. Extra socks to avoid blisters.
- Beware of Bears, Cougars, etc. Do not pack in food. A bear can smell a candy bar a mile away.

## FORAGING TIPS

- Tools:
  - Pocket knife - a knife is necessary to clean up the stems of mushrooms, cut them to check for worms, and to cleanly extract mushrooms from the ground.
  - Wicker/woven basket - mushrooms will become slimy in plastic. With a ventilated basket you are sowing spores as you walk along, planting future crops!
  - A cleaning tool - bring along a paint brush or soft-bristle toothbrush to clean mushrooms after you've picked them. Brush off excess dirt/duff. It makes cleaning easier when you get home.
- Remember to leave some mushrooms for the next guy.
- Get your mushroom eyes on! Once you start finding them you see them everywhere.
- When searching for mushrooms never take one you aren't 100% sure of.
- Go with a knowledgeable chaperone. Look over your fellow forager's haul before sending them home. One of the main places to start is to take a spore print of one of your mushrooms.
- Know plants and insects that may be irritating or poisonous: e.g., nettle, Devil's Club, Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum* - not the tree hemlock), poison oak, poison ivy (mostly Eastern WA), Yellow Jacket nests in the ground.
- Best time in Western Washington to look for mushrooms:
  - Morels: April - May. First day of 70 degrees after a rain. They grow where there was fire the previous years. Most abundant in Cascades and Eastern WA.
  - Chanterelles: July - November (depending on rain). Wait until the forest floor is wet. Companion plants to look for when foraging for Chanterelles (they need these plants to thrive):
    - Douglas fir
    - Sword fern
    - Evergreen huckleberry
  - Agaricus: Early summer. Fields and meadows.
  - Coprinus (AKA: Shaggy Mane, Inky cap): Late summer. Found in lawns/part shade.

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## RECOMMENDED READING

[All that the Rain Promises and More](#), by David Aurora

[Backyard Foraging](#), by Ellen Zachos

[Fungi Perfecti Catalogue](#), by Paul Stamets

[How to Grow Mushrooms from Scratch](#), by Wurth & Wurth

Mycelium Running, by Paul Stamets

Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast, Pohar & McKinnon, ed.

(Waterproof) Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest (fold-out), by J.D. Sept

## **RECOMMENDED WEBSITES**

[Noxious Weeds that Harm Washington State](#)

[Puget Sound Mycological Society \(PSMS\)](#)

[Wild Harvests: Wild food experiments and personal foraging accounts from the Pacific Northwest centering on Northwest Washington and Southern Vancouver Island](#)