



Walt Sundberg wrote the following articles for the folks in the Missouri Mycological Society. These are the first & second in a series for publication in their newsletter, the *Earthstar Examiner*. The article on this page is from Issue 95 March 2009.

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Building your "Mushroom Memory" (part 1)

Do you remember when you first went on a mushroom foray? Why did you start? Was it curiosity, love of nature, or just the nature of the hunt? What were your goals? What did you know about mushrooms before going? Answers to these questions probably hinge on where you grew up (city or rural), and your family background, their interests, and activities.

Growing up in San Francisco, and in spite of the fact that for years, we spent parts of our summers among the redwoods near Santa Cruz, I wasn't introduced to wild mushrooms until my Junior and Senior years in College. I was truly surprised to learn (and see) that mushrooms were abundant (but previously unseen by me) in those same places where I spent some of my youth! And, I still vividly recall my first fall/early winter of trying to learn (and recall the names of) the mushrooms I found the past year.

I know that many of us go through various stages and processes in our learning about mushrooms. At first, many are interested in learning which are edible and, for safety's sake, easy to recognize with certainty. For some of us, this is "good enough". But, because of curiosity, mushroom beauty, etc., many of us eventually begin a quest to learn more—to go beyond just the recognition of the "foolproof five" or "sensible seven." At that point, species recognition—remembering and recognizing the salient features and name of each species—becomes more important. This creates problems for many of us since the "prey" is seasonal. How does one accomplish such goals?

For this purpose, I am initiating this "intermittent continuing series" of Newsletter articles to suggest ways that might enhance success in making personally visible progress.

Many of us think of mushroom learning as something that takes place only (or mostly) during the warmer months—the fruiting season. However, the winter/pre-spring periods offer excellent opportunities to learn—via "arm chair" mycology. Herein I offer two important suggestions. Both should be done frequently at ALL TIMES of year. Start NOW!

1. Whenever possible, review the illustrations of mushrooms and other fleshy fungi in your personal library—books, mushroom magazines, etc. Because of your familiarity with the pictures, it will ultimately be possible for you to sometimes recognize and/or identify fungi you have never seen before when you come across them in the field. This is true "arm-chair mycology."

2. Begin to make a **personal "life-list"** of fungi you KNOW and/or have seen in the field or at forays. *List by scientific names*; include common names as well--if this helps you. If possible, use a computer spread sheet like Microsoft Excel. Such a list can be continually modified and updated. **PRINT THE LIST OUT.** Review it *over and over again*, and modify it often, whenever as your knowledge of mushroom species increases (as you see and learn new species in the field). **Most important: Carry it with you and use it to jog your memory on field trips!** You will be surprised at how much more you will soon remember with the help of your list.

Building your “Mushroom Memory” Part 2

Mushroom season 2009 is now on and, alas, the morels are already gone! But, there is a lot more to hunt, to see, to collect, to learn, and perhaps to taste now and in the coming months. Thus, there is a lot more time to Build Your “Mushroom Memory” this year. Did you start preparing your personal mushroom life list yet? If so, great. If not, it is NEVER to late to start. Start yours now! And, always carry a copy with you on field trips for “memory jogging”.

Start by making a list of fungi you know and have personally seen fresh in the field or at a foray on the table. Continue adding to your list each time you see another that is new to you! Once started, a personal mushroom life list is like each of us. It may start small, but grows, changes, and, with time and continued input (attention), becomes better, more useful and effective.

As your mushroom life list grows, using it with ease (in the field or at home) may become somewhat cumbersome. For example, in its list of fungi found at the annual Mingo Foray, MOMS now has names (listed alphabetically) for over 600 mushrooms and related fungi found there! Foraging through a long list (perhaps pages) of names to find the one you can’t quite remember is laborious.

What can you do to make your life list easier to use—especially in the field or at a foray? I suggest organizing it by subdividing the species into “general” groups that are useful and meaningful to you. In this way and through use, you will enhance your memory of fungus names and, indirectly, your knowledge of at least some of their features and relationships.

For possible use, I suggest and offer two outlines of groups below. The first is short and may be handy if your life list is short. If you have a large number of fungi in your list, a more elaborate further subdivision – like one I use – is offered. Whatever you do, organize your list in some way useful to you – and use it both at home and on forays.

Suggestion I:

- Myxomycetes – Slime Molds
- Ascomycetes – Sac Fungi
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi
- Lichens



Suggestion II:

- Myxomycetes – Slime Molds
- Ascomycetes – Sac Fungi – Plectomycetes
- Ascomycetes – Sac Fungi – Pyrenomycetes
- Ascomycetes – Sac Fungi – Discomycetes – Inoperculates
- Ascomycetes – Sac Fungi – Discomycetes – Operculates
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Jelly Fungi – Tremellales
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Smooth Fungi – Thelephoroids
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Clavariaceae – Coral Fungi
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Hydnaceae – Tooth Fungi
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Polyporaceae – Polypores and relatives
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Cantharellaceae – Chanterelles
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Boletaceae – Boletes (Fleshy Pore Fungi)
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Agaricales – Mushrooms
- Basidiomycetes – Club Fungi – Gasteromycetes – Puffballs and relatives
- Deuteromycetes – Imperfect Fungi – Molds and mildews
- Zygomycetes – Sporangium-bearing Fungi
- Lichens

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