

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

22 September 2015

THE SEASON UNFURLS

Every year I am repeatedly asked the same question: when is the height of the mushroom season? The answer is that it varies from location to location and from year to year. That said, in Mid-Wales in three years out of five it is probably the first weekend in October. In the other two years it will be a week or two earlier or later. Our spring season starts a week or two later than the milder South East and the main autumn crop begins a little earlier in our hills than in the warmer lowlands.



When can we expect the bumper crops?

My feeling is this year's peak should be on time – the weekend of 3 and 4 October. This is large part because so far things seem to be only just starting. I went out yesterday on a foray designed to show off as many species as possible. We found chicken of the woods (far too old to be edible, but in good enough condition to show what it looks like), then chanterelles, various russulas, a giant puffball, ceps, bay boletes, cauliflower, deceivers and brown birch boletes. And there were a reasonable number of blushers and

fly agaric as well. The last are important because they are the ideal 'indicator' mushroom for the far more discreet cep. This is particularly important for the beginner who is desperately trying to find their own patches.



This picture was taken in 2013, but it illustrates how the conspicuous fly agaric can point to greater things . . .

Further to William and Helen's discovery of a giant puffball last week, reader Anna reports finding them near Dolgellau and I found one of my own yesterday in my most reliable spot. This is a huge clump of nettles growing on what, I believe, was once a midden. Personally I am not a fan, but will reluctantly concede that their sheer size means even my pulse quickens a little when I come across one.



Giant puffballs are coming out. . . if you like that sort of thing

But to return to the theme of the height of the season, the significant thing about the ceps was that they were very small and in really good condition. Now I am inveterate optimist, but I think they could signal the start of the main flush . . .



A perfect tiny cep discovered yesterday

This suspicion is also backed up by Howard who says things are going 'bonkers in Berkshire . . . I've never seen anything like it'.

All this bodes well for those of you who are booked onto my forthcoming forays (the last scheduled outing is on 18 October). But with luck it will also spur the rest of you out of your armchairs and into your local woods, fields, parks and golf courses. Remember, any fungal activity, whether edible, inedible or poisonous, is promising, but fly agaric are a particularly welcome sight.



Bon appétit!

Daniel Butler

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P.S. As always, let me know if you want to be removed from the list and I will do it forthwith.