

Some remarkable fungi of London.

Comprising over 14,000 hectares of public parks, woodland, gardens and cemeteries, London is the greenest major city in Europe, with 40% of London's surface area comprising green space that is accessible to the public.

A wide diversity of habitats, including unimproved grassland, woodland, heathland and scrub with various water features, on various soils from Chalk to London Clay to Bagshot Sands, provides home to 1000's of native trees and shrubs such as, oak, beech, birch, willow, poplar, Scots pine and many more. All of this glorious green space is irresistible to fungi, which thrive across the city landscape. Step into your local green space and you are likely to see fungi of some kind. Over 600 species have been recorded from Hampstead Heath alone.

Below are a just a small number of the fungi species to be found in London, some of which may be difficult to find elsewhere in Britain.

***Podoscypha multizonata* - Zoned Rosette**

This species has its stronghold in the southern counties of England and London is one of those strongholds. The Zoned Rosette is a red data species and has a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) attached to it. 80% of the known world sites are in England, mostly with a southern bias. It occurs on the roots of broadleaved trees, usually oak, in open woodland or old parks.

***Paxillus obscurusporus* - "Fat - Lipped Roll Rim"**

Commonly known as a Roll Rim, this particular species has only recently been described and was new to Britain in 2008. This is a large species, reaching 35cm across, with characteristic, persistent, in-rolled margin. A common species in London's parks and open green spaces, often in large numbers beneath lime trees, one of the trees with which it forms a mutual symbiosis.

***Grifola frondosa* – Hen of the Woods**

Found at the base of deciduous trees, during the autumn, this very well camouflaged, 'leafy' polypore was once considered quite rare. It favours old oak trees in parkland or woodland, so therefore it thrives in the London area as both are in fairly good supply. Although a root rotter, it is a splendid fungus to stumble across whilst out on an autumn stroll.

***Leccinum duriusculum* – Slate Bolete**

Mutually symbiotic, forming a mycorrhizal relationship with poplar trees. The Slate Bolete is quite a cosmopolitan species, occurring with different species of poplar, in cemeteries, public parks and with street poplars on grass verges, right across London. A key identification feature is that the flesh will turn pink and then slate upon cutting in section.

***Butyriboletus appendiculatus* – Oak Bolete**

Many of the large species of *Boletus* such as this, are thermophilic, that is to say that they prefer the warm temperatures that a city like London has in being at least 2o C warmer than areas outside of London. It forms a mutual symbiosis (mycorrhiza) with oak and beech trees. Cold, wet summers will not favour this and other species.

***Amanita phalloides* -The Death Cap**

This deadly mushroom is locally common across London; forming a mutual symbiosis via a mycorrhizal relationship with deciduous trees, favouring oak and hornbeam trees in parks, cemeteries or gardens, from summer to autumn. White gills, olive to white cap, white stem with greenish hue and white velar remnants, base with sac-like volva. Smell sickly sweet. Onset of poisoning can take up to 36 hours depending on the dose, with severe diarrhoea, vomiting, dehydration, false cessation followed by liver failure, kidney malfunction, coma, death.

***Amanita virosa* -The Destroying Angel**

A much rarer species, with the same outcome as the Death Cap if ingested, occurs in woodland close to London. Pure and as white as snow, it associates with beech trees in well-established woodlands. The smooth, conical cap is often off centre, the stem shaggy looking, and the base of the stem, as with the Death Cap, is clothed in white tissue, appearing loose and bag-like.

***Cortinarius nolaneiformis* - "Bellita Webcap" (*nolanei* = small bell, *formis* = shaped like)**

The genus *Cortinarius* is believed to contain the greatest number of species among any genera of mushrooms, worldwide. They are commonly known as the webcaps, as they have a web-like veil that covers the gills when young. Gills initially variable in colour but finally rust-brown. This species was recorded during a survey on Hampstead Heath; it turned out to be new to Britain.

***Russula carpini* - "Hornbeam Brittle Gill"**

This is a very rare species that associates solely with *Carpinus*, Hornbeam, as the name suggests. It is one of the many species of Brittle gills, which characterises the *Russula* genus, among which species have many different colours in both cap, gills and stem.

This species was discovered to be new to Middlesex during a survey of Regents Park.

***Laetiporus sulphureus* – Chicken of the Woods**

This beautiful bright yellow, salmon fringed polypore, forms large tiers that adorn lots of different trees, in many different habitats right across London. Usually appearing during late May into the summer months, it is a welcome and colourful sight. It occurs on oak, willow, beech, poplar, cherry, hawthorn, false acacia and more, in parks, gardens, cemeteries and woodlands.

Andy Overall.

Common names as per British Mycological Society where available. Otherwise in "quotes".

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