

## UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

### Fecund Fungi, Prolific Parasols, Fungi Roulette (take your pick)



Q. Why are there so many mushrooms this fall? Is it safe to eat them?

A. Each spring and fall, when the weather is warm and rainy, new crops of mushrooms seem to sprout almost overnight. Because we've had so much recent rain, it seems like mushrooms are everywhere. You'll find them on lawns, in pastures and forests, on mulches of all kinds, on stumps and on living and dead trees.

What exactly are mushrooms? They are the fruits (or reproductive parts) of fungi. The job of mushrooms is to produce spores, the "seeds" of the fungus. They play a beneficial role in the environment, aiding in the breakdown of organic matter.

Because a few wild mushrooms are deadly and others are mildly poisonous, you need to be certain that collected mushrooms are edible and that you cook them before eating. If you are interested in hunting mushrooms, join a mushroom (mycology) club, and learn how to identify edible mushrooms from experts. Online you can find local chapters by visiting the Mycological Society of America. Conservation centers will often hold classes and walks lead by experienced mycologists.

Mushroom appearance can vary wildly within a species and even between mushrooms growing next to each other. There's a reason for the old saying, "There are old mushroom hunters, and bold mushroom hunters, but there are no old, bold mushroom hunters." And in New Hampshire with the number of emergency room visits from ingesting wild mushrooms climbing from 8 in 2009, to 11 in 2010 and up to 31 (so far) in 2011, that's real food for thought.

**Got questions?** UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu).

---

---