

A Mushroom Field Trip for Beginners


OR, how not to get lost in the woods and eat poisonous mushrooms for food.

Listed below are some things that you might want to consider before venturing in to the woods in search of mushrooms.

1. Since the best time to “go mushrooming” is the Fall, sun screen is generally not required.
2. Insect repellent is a nice “to have” but is also not generally required in the Fall.

SO, what is required?

3. A pair of stout walking shoes or hiking boots.
4. A walking cane is also useful for probing undergrowth and supporting oneself on uneven ground.
5. Also, and especially in the Fall a brightly coloured jacket and/or hat to alert hunters who may be in the woods pursuing their pastime.
6. In unfamiliar surroundings a compass or GPS is also a wise item to carry.
7. A whistle or a small air horn (handy for bears and coyotes☺), that will alert other members of your group should you become separated from them.
8. A good knife is also necessary for digging up the whole mushroom. One of the identifying characteristics of mushrooms from the genus “*Amanita*” is the cup or “*Volva*” at the base of the mushroom. Approximately 80% of the mushroom poisonings in North America are attributed to mushrooms from the genus “*Amanita*”.
9. If you are anything like me, don’t forget your camera.
10. Wet weather clothing including rubber boots, should you decide to enter a bog etc.
11. If you intend to later identify your “finds”, if not immediately identifiable, an open basket that can “breathe” is necessary. One made of wicker is ideal since many species of mushrooms can deteriorate very quickly.
12. Wax paper or small brown paper bags to isolate your “finds”.
13. A small hand lense with 10x being sufficient.
14. A packed lunch and a bottle of your favourite beverage.
15. If you think you would like to pursue “shrooming” as a hobby then you should consider investing in a good **Field Guide**. I would strongly recommend that you purchase at least two guides. There are a number of reasons for this. Mycology, the scientific study of mushrooms, is a relatively new science and as such is still evolving. A field guide purchased “today” may include a mushroom known by one name whereas a field guide purchased ten or twenty years ago may list the same mushroom by a different name. Very confusing, especially for newcomers to shrooming. Having said all that, I will now recommend a book that was published in 1986! WHY?, simply because it is the best book that I have seen that probably answers all the questions that a mushroom” newbie” is likely to ask. I must add one caveat to my recommendation, **DO NOT RELY ON THIS BOOK FOR INFORMATION ON EDIBILITY**. Otherwise, it is an excellent book. The book is “**Mushrooms Demystified**” by David Arora. It is still in print and is available online from either Chapters or Amazon.



Another excellent book is **“The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms”** and it has the advantage of being readily available at most book sellers. It was the very first book that I bought over 25 years ago and I still have the same copy. That says a lot about its durability and usefulness.

16. Finally, bring along your curiosity, your sense of humour and the desire to have a good time in the company of like minded people.

Should you have any questions, concerns or comments you can e-mail me by clicking [here](#).

You can also visit my web site by clicking [here](#).