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ZEMESZVAIGZNE

GEASTRUM



Puffballs and fat

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The relationship among various puffballs can best be seen in their last growth stage, when ripe spores can be easily persuaded out from the fruitbody – a touch of the fingertip releases a cloud of spores.

Puffballs are not a systematic but a morphological group. This means that they are not related, but have similar-looking fruitbodies.

Puffball spores are formed inside the fruitbody – like an abdomen. This is evidenced by the scientific name of this fungus – *Gasteromycetes* (from the Greek word – *gaster*, which means – “belly”).

Many puffballs are relatives of *Agaricus*, but the yellow false truffle is even related to the bolete!

The fruitbodies of puffballs, round puffballs, hare-puffballs, common earthballs are round, round-like, pear-shaped, sometimes even very large!



Photo: Andris Soms

A giant puffball can grow to the size of a sheep and produce billions of spores. If they all sprouted, the entire planet Earth would be covered with the offspring of one fruitbody!

As the spores ripen, the fruitbody breaks and the spores spread as a brownish, frothy mass.

Stinkhorns, red stinkhorn and dog stinkhorns are also puffballs. The fruitbodies of stinkhorns are initially ovoid, but later in a very short time, sometimes within a few hours a porous stalk grows with an odorous, herbal mucous mass at the end. The fungus spreads a foul odour, which one can smell at a large distance. The smell attracts flies, they eat the green mucus and help spread the fungal spores. In the initial stage, the stinkhorns are edible, and the jelly-like mass can be used as a face mask – to preserve eternal youth.

For some puffballs, the fruitbodies resemble dishes or nests. Their spores develop in special formations – peridioles, which are located inside these dishes. Raindrops help to spread the spores, when they then drop into the dish thereby causing the spores to be hit out of the peridioles.

Yellow false truffles grow in the sand of dunes, they are often mistaken for truffles.

Common earthballs are hard and firm even in their later stage of development. However, as the spores mature, even these break!

Mushroom coloring page



Zīmējums: Baiba Soma



Mushroom coloring page



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