



New Year 2026

# Fungi Kingdom News

The newsletter of the Pioneer Valley Mycological Association

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*Tectella patellaris*, the “veiled Panus,” fruiting in January in Shutesbury.

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*Stereum ostrea*, spotted by Mike O.



## Pioneer Valley Mycological Association

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### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Pioneer Valley Mycological Association is dedicated to enhancing the public's knowledge and appreciation of the fungal kingdom by providing ongoing educational programming in the form of guided mushroom walks, lectures, newsletters, information on multi-day regional and national forays, and citizen science projects. Because fungi are integral components of complex ecosystems, we are committed to advocating for responsible and sustainable study and collection methods. We focus on, but are not limited to, the three counties of the Pioneer Valley in western Massachusetts (Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden).

PVMA is a member of the Northeast Mycological Federation ([www.nemf.org](http://www.nemf.org)) and the North American Mycological Association ([www.namyco.org](http://www.namyco.org)).

[www.PVMAmyco.org](http://www.PVMAmyco.org)

Also visit Dianna Smith's educational site [fungikingdom.net](http://fungikingdom.net) for articles, fungi photos, and more.

### Submissions Welcome!

This is your newsletter; we'd love to have you contribute to it! Art, prose, photos, drawing, recipes, scientific observations— send them all to:

[jessicabensonevans@gmail.com](mailto:jessicabensonevans@gmail.com) or [jonkranz@kranzcom.com](mailto:jonkranz@kranzcom.com)

## From the President

Happy, happy, happy New Year! I'm just now emerging from my deep winter hibernation brought on by the early dark and a few too many holiday cookies. It got deeply cold and snow-covered in my woods in early December, and I haven't spent much time out looking for fungi since then. My loss, of course! There are always fungi to find, depending on how hard you look.



As we begin a new year, Peter is hard at work on the walk schedule for our 2026 season and we'd love your help! Do you have a great trail in mind, with adequate parking, for our club to try out this year? Reply to this newsletter email or reach out to Peter directly. We're always looking for new places to enjoy!

Beyond the walks, there are many ways to enjoy membership in PVMA! We are taking part in the MycoConsortium again this Spring, so there will be online lectures available through mushroom season's start. Also, keep an eye out for in-person events at Laurel Park, which we are working on scheduling now.

Looking forward to seeing you soon! ~~~Jess



© Jess Evans

A supine *Ampulloclitocybe clavipes*. This one was posed by the photographer, as they generally don't occur in this manner. :)

# The Trail That Kept On Giving

Jess Evans

A few weeks ahead of our last scheduled walk of the 2025 season at Federated Women's Club State Forest in Petersham, I got an email from Jonathan Kranz with a brilliant idea. He suggested that after our walk, club members join him for a packed-in lunch at an overlook of the Quabbin Reservoir a hike-able distance from our usual route on the Federated trails. Absolutely! I put out the word to club members and eagerly anticipated the informal celebration/closing of our walk season with friends.

From start to finish, our walk at Federated Women's turned out to be the most fruitful of the season in so many ways. We began, with Jonathan's excellent walk leadership, alongside several species of fungi just in the parking area alone. *Xeromphalina campanella* greeted us from the log parking barrier, and a troop of *Hygrophorus flavodiscus* beckoned from the slope alongside the trail entrance. Underfoot, something that looked suspiciously like *Collybia nuda* (Bluets) had been accidentally crushed. Undeterred by this tragedy, we looked hopefully ahead to find more.

It had been an incredibly dry 2025 mushroom season up until that point, with several walks and other events cancelled due to lack of fungi. We were thrilled to see that every few steps, fungi revealed themselves at Federated Women's! While edible species weren't prolific, we spotted small fruitings of *Armillaria* (honey mushrooms), including some that chose the same log as fresh *Galerina marginata* (deadly Galerina). This presented an excellent educational opportunity on the importance of field ID characteristics *and* making spore prints. Honey mushrooms will have a white spore print, while the deadly Galerina's print is rusty brown.

Speaking of un-palatable species, Jonathan and I were also briefly perplexed by a large collection of *Hebeloma crustuliniforme*; the "Poison Pie" mushroom. Perplexed in that neither of us had ever found it before! This mycorrhizal species has a radish-like odor, beige cap, and gills that age brown, and causes nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting when consumed. (If you've ever heard me talk about toxic fungi, you know that I frequently cite this trio of symptoms!) No thanks, right?



Walk attendees cluster around Jonathan as he describes ID features.



*Hebeloma crustuliniforme*, commonly known as "poison pie."

Our usual *Grifola frondosa* spot did not pan out, but we found a shareable quantity of Bluets as well as a few *Hydnum umbilicatum* (hedgehogs). A few logs also yielded fresh puffballs, *Apioperdon pyriforme*, so those interested in a mushroom meal were pleased.

After about two hours of meandering, we decided it was time for our picnic. Jonathan led the way, up and up through oaks, beeches, and pines. A few of us straggled behind and began to wonder if we'd lost the correct trail, me included. A quick consultation of the mapping app suggested that we were on the wrong track. With a little faith in ourselves and our sense of direction, however, we located the rest of the group. Actually, there was no missing them, as our intrepid club members were all seated at the edge of a gorgeous rocky overlook with the glistening Quabbin in the distance.



Above: Club members picnic.

Below: Jonathan contemplates the view of the Quabbin.



Club members really came together to put on a fabulous celebratory luncheon! Someone produced a thermos, carried through the hike, with still-piping-hot apple cider inside. Jonathan had visited *The Cheese Shop* and brought a variety of gourmet cheeses (along with a full-sized cutting board, cheese knife, crackers, and salami!) Smoked tofu, homemade baked goods, fresh fruit, and other delights rounded out the selection. There was such abundance, we even began offering snacks to other hikers as they wandered by. It was glorious.

You may think that here ends the adventure, but in fact the gifts of Federated Women's Club State Forest had only just begun to be revealed.



One of these is not like the others. Can you spot the Bluet? Hint, two are Cortinarius, and one is *Collybia nuda*.

On my way out, I stopped at a small pullout within the forest to check on an area that had been logged in previous years. In the past, I'd spotted some interesting Cortinari species and wanted to see if they were there again. Unfortunately, there was someone parked there who was a little too friendly and I felt uncomfortable. Another essay would be needed to explain why a solo female hiker might feel like someone else would be "too friendly," but that's not today's story.

As I headed home, I resolved to revisit the trail another day soon, since that location had been the only fruitful mushroom hike in months. Another day became the next day, as I found myself with a few free hours in between work commitments. Federated Women's is also just over 20 minutes from my house, making it one of the closest PVMA walk locations for me.

Monday, October 26 shall forever after be cemented in my mind as the most exciting mushroom day in years. I parked my car in the same little pullout as the previous day, packed up my basket, and headed into the logged clearing a scant hundred feet away or so. The Cortinari species I'd been wondering about? Present. Large numbers of stinkhorns (*Phallus impudicus*)? They were there, too. More puffballs than I could count? Also there. From the corner of my eye, though, I spotted something unexpected. Something brightly orange-yellow, gregarious, popping up through the wood chips and around logs.

As I approached the mushrooms, I ran through the narrow knowledge I have of large ground-dwelling, wood-inhabiting, yellow/orange fungi and ruled out all of the potential suspects. This was something different. Closer inspection revealed a species I'd only seen in texts and a few times on social media courtesy of myco-friends. Bill Yule of CVMS had posted this species recently, I believed, as had the 3 Foragers.

*Phaeolepiota aurea*, also known as *Cystoderma aureum* and commonly called the Golden Bootleg is a large, golden-colored saprobe with conspicuous granules on the cap and a skirt-like ring. While not commonly encountered, its striking appearance means that once you've found it once, you'll never misidentify it again.

I happened upon this large fruiting while it was relatively young, so I resolved to revisit again to hopefully get a glimpse of the gills once the thick veil had broken. I



Above and below: *Phaeolepiota aurea*



took too many pictures as well as a few specimens, hoping to continue studying them at home. By studying them, of course, I mean place them in a mug with damp paper towels in hopes that they would continue opening (much like Amanitas do).

My kitchen windowsill with *P. aurea*.



*Tricholoma fulvum* was a great surprise, and slimy-but-lovely *Hygrophorus fuliginus* sprang up gregariously. I could have stayed there all afternoon, but the school bus would be arriving to deliver my kiddo home shortly.

This story could have ended there, and perhaps it should have, but I'm not one to do anything by half measure. Those Golden Bootlegs were all I could think about, and I just had to get out there one more time to see their progress. My windowsill mug-full of them had finally broken their veils, but not in a particularly satisfying way as they'd dried out and become brittle.

On Halloween, I made my last visit to Federated Women's for the year. (The final paragraphs of this essay reveal this to be untrue.)

From this retelling so far, you might suspect that I only had eyes for *Phaeolepiota aurea* on this visit to Federated Women's. On the contrary, I recognized that for whatever reason the micro-conditions at the trail meant that mushrooms were fruiting with abandon and I'd likely have good luck finding other interesting things at the same location.



Left: *Hygrophorus fuliginus*. Above: *Tricholoma fulvum*.



My large cluster of *P. aurea* continued to advance and age, and the adjacent stinkhorn colony continued to do what it does best. I was able to take new photographs of the progression of the maturing fruitbodies (of both species), satisfying my urge to document all stages of growth. Up close and personal with stinkhorns is the sacrifice I make for science (as well as collecting them for windowsill fruiting!).

My myco-senses were correct, and as I wandered the woods directly adjacent to this epic find, I felt as if I'd stepped into another year's mushroom season altogether. Several different varieties of *Cortinarius* were present, including *Cortinarius semisanguineus* and *C. caperatus*. I also spotted a *Chalciporus*, which is a lovely Bolete with a red-dish-pink blush to the cap and pores. A little cluster of



Windowsill progression, with stinkhorns added.



I was able to convince myself to try other trails at Federated that day, beyond that little mushroom kin-dom. *Pholiota lenta* featured heavily, as well as *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (false chanterelle), Entolomas, an unidentified Cortinarius, and a large quantity of gone-by *Grifola frondosa*. Unrelated directly to mycology, there's also a very active beaver family at Federated Women's and they've been working on some of the largest trees I've ever seen a beaver attempt to take down. Indirectly, I am sure the fallen trees will become fungal nurseries before long.

One last visit to the same location on November 6<sup>th</sup> actually became the last visit of the year. If I hadn't decided to return, I would have missed the epic number of bluets fruiting throughout the trails, including in the parking lot (where perhaps we've dropped specimens over the years!). I also found a tiny unfamiliar Entoloma, some gorgeous Hypholomas, and a lovely cluster of *Ampulloclitocybe clavipes*.

As many of you know, work is busiest for me in the summer and fall. Late October and November are for me the long-awaited break from long work hours and very little time to get out into the woods on my own. The sum-

mer drought meant that there were very few mushrooms even when I did get out, and I really needed something hopeful to end the season. Some might view repeated visits to the same trails as a little bit strange, but I think you all understand that once you finally find mushrooms, you want to keep finding them. Those magical visits to Federated Women's were exactly what I needed, exactly when I needed them.



*Hydnum umbilicatum* from along the road.



Above left: *Collybia nuda* (Bluets) Head back to page 4— can you tell which one is the bluet now? Above right: *Chalchiporus piperatus*. Below: *Cortinarius* species.



# What Good is a Mushroom Without Flavor?

**Anna Seitz**

Auricularia spp. are seldom given any space in most mushroom cookbooks. They are in our woods. There are at least four distinct species in America. All species are edible. It is sold in every Asian grocery store. They have been cultivated in China since 600 AD — some species for medicinal purposes and some species for culinary use. It is a dark wrinkled looking thing, and it does look like ears. It has no distinctive flavor, totally bland.

Why is it so popular in Asian cookery? This flavorless small mushroom is valued for its texture. It is crunchy, chewy, smooth and a little gelatinous, a contrast to most ingredients in a dish. Texture is not something Western culinary tradition pays too much attention to. We all respond to texture. Texture makes food a lot more interesting to the palate. Sometimes they call it mouth feel.

I acquire my Auricularia dried from my Chinese grocery store. There are two kinds—cloud ear and wood ear. Wood ears are for medicinal purposes and cloud ears are for culinary purposes. I make sure I select cloud ear for cooking. Cloud ears are more tender and easier to rehydrate.

Like all mushrooms, cloud ears must be cooked. It retains its crunchiness even if you leave it cooking longer than you intend. If you have had hot and sour soup or mu shu pork in a Chinese restaurant you probably have eaten it without knowing. It is there to provide texture.

While texture is one of its main attributes to a dish, it does take on flavors easily. That is its other asset.

## **Wood/Cloud Ear Mushroom Salad**

*The cloud ear mushroom takes on the flavor of the dressing well and contributes both flavor and texture to the salad.*

1 oz dried cloud ear mushroom  
Equal volume of sliced peppers: different colors make the salad look more inviting.  
Dressing:  
2 Tbsp Chinese black vinegar (substitute Balsamic vinegar)  
2 Tbsp light soy sauce  
1 tsp sugar  
1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil

### Rehydrate & cook mushrooms.

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add wood ear mushrooms and cook for 3 minutes.  
Rinse with cold water, drain. Remove the hard part and cut into bite size.

### Dressing:

Mix light soy sauce, black rice vinegar, sugar and sesame oil in a small bowl. Stir to mix well. Shortly before serving, combine mushrooms and vegetables in a bowl, Add the dressing and toss to coat the ingredients.

## Steam Chicken with cloud ear & Shitake Mushrooms

*The cloud ear's crunchiness contrasts well with the soft chicken and the chewy shitake. Shitake is often paired with cloud ear in Chinese cooking, one adding flavor and the other texture.*



8 g dried wood ear mushrooms  
8 g dried daylily buds  
12 g or 6 medium dried shiitake  
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1 scallion (chopped, green portion)

### Marinade:

1/4 cup Soaking shitake water  
1 tablespoon peanut oil  
1/4 teaspoon sesame oil  
1 tsp dry sherry  
1 tablespoon oyster sauce  
1/4 teaspoon sugar  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 tsp freshly ground white pepper  
1/2 teaspoon ginger (grated)  
1 scallion (chopped, white portion)

1. Rehydrate wood ear, dried daylily and dried shitake mushroom. Save the water from the shitake mushroom. Chop the wood ears. Slice shitake into quarter-inch thick.

2. Marinate chicken, wood ears, shitake mushrooms and daylily in the marinade. Mix until most of the liquid is absorbed into the chicken. Marinate at room temperature for a few hours or overnight in the refrigerator.

3. Before cooking, let the chicken mixture come up to room temperature. Mix in the cornstarch. Transfer the mixture to a deep plate and sprinkle half of the green portion of the scallions over the top. Steam over medium high heat till done (15-20minutes). Shut off the heat and leave the chicken in the steamer for another 2 minutes. Sprinkle the rest of the scallions over the top.

# Late Fall and Winter Mushroom Sightings!

©Peter Russell



*Hygrophorus chrysodon* from Laurel Park, Northampton.

©Jess Evans



*Encoelia furfuracea*, fruiting in January on birch.

©Jess Evans



*Steccherinum ochraceum*.

# Late Fall and Winter Mushroom Sightings!

©Peter Russell



*Tricholoma magnivelare*, "Matsutake," spotted by Peter Russell. See below for comparison with the false matsutake.

©Peter Russell



*Tricholoma caligatum*, the "false Matsutake."

©Mike Ostrowski



*Neofavolus alveolaris*, the "hexagonal-pored polypore."

# Project Updates

## Karen Hidalgo

### Log Study

I have continued to visit three fallen oak logs regularly. The project has been going for over a year now. All three oak logs hosted many fungi this season despite the dryness, and some hosted insects and slime molds as well.

I sent several specimens for DNA sequencing as part of the Fall Continental Mycoblitz Project. I am awaiting results. The logs generated many of the species you would expect to find such as *Trametes versicolor*, *Plicaturopsis crispa*, *Panellus stipticus*, *Phlebia* species TBD, *Stereum complicatum*, *Stereum ostrea* and more. They also were inhabited by *Calycina citrina*, *Sarcomyxa serotina*, *Radulomyces copelandii*, a *Mycena* species TBD, and several slime molds including *Hemitrichia calyculata* and *Metatrichia vesparium*.

Dedicating myself to this project and the burn area study has been interesting for me in terms of how I may be changing the environment and how my studies are changing me. I am surely creating paths and compacting soil around my logs, and possibly transporting spores from one log to another. As to how I have been impacted, I'd say that my intense focus on the projects has limited my range a lot. Nearly all of my time in the woods this season was in one corner of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area.

### Burn Area Study

I have visited the burn area two or three times a week most weeks from May to November. Sometimes I spent hours wandering around, seeing what I could see over much of the 52 acre burn zone. More often, I stayed close to the trail and focused on one area where it appears the burn was especially hot. This particular spot generated a great number of burn mushrooms.



### Log Study

#### Stats

Totals

**581**

Observations »

**61**

Species »

**1**

People »

I attended the NEMF foray in Ithaca, New York in September. There was an early bird workshop to learn and practice DNA sequencing. They allowed you to bring 10 specimens for sequencing for a reasonable fee. I took part in the workshop and had several of the burn mushrooms' IDs confirmed. (See the summer edition of the newsletter for the burn species list as of July.) Fungi whose IDs were confirmed included *Pholiota highlandensis*, *Rhizina undulata*, and *Psathyrella pennata*. A small orange disc fungi that I had labeled *Anthrocochia melanoma* actually turned out to be *Sphaerosporella "sp-IN01"* which could also be called *Trichophaea sp.*

One exciting addition to the fire fungi species list from Fitzgerald Lake is a burn *Laccaria*. When I first saw these mushrooms, I thought they were *Laccaria laccata*. But I observed how they appeared in great numbers in the same places that the *Trichophaea*, *Pholiota highlandensis* and *Psathyrella pennata* had appeared. That made me think it could be a burn mushroom. Sequencing via the NEMF foray showed them to be *Laccaria trichoderma*, or something very close to that. Another fire associated fungus to add to the list is *Lachnum pygmaeum*, photographed by Peter Russell and identified on iNaturalist by Igor Khomenko and Simon Gurvets.

*Lachnum pygmaeum*.



# Project Updates

As of November 14th, the burn *Pholiota*, *Laccaria* and *Psathyrella* species could still be found, the first two in abundance, with the *Psathyrella* more scant. For those who might permit mention of something that is not a fungus, I also found several liverworts in this area, most likely *Marchantia polymorpha*. Liverworts are non-vascular plants.

Both projects can be found on iNaturalist under the user name Eileen680. They are titled Log Study and Fitzgerald Lake Post Fire.

 Fitzgerald Lake Post Fire

**Stats**

Totals	Most Observations	Most Species
<b>1216</b> Observations »	 eileen680 1204 observations	 eileen680 150 species
<b>179</b> Species »	 abbifungi 8 observations	 abbifungi 4 species
<b>4</b> People »	 jan_de_wilde 3 observations	 jan_de_wilde 3 species
	 pjirthe1st 1 observation	 pjirthe1st 1 species



Above: *Laccaria trichodermophora*



Above: *Marchantia polymorpha*

Editor's note: These are impressive stats! If you take a look at the Log Study Project, Karen has made 581 individual observations and identified 61 distinct species and is the only observer. The Burn Study project has had 4 observers, mostly Karen, and has gathered 1,216 observations with 179 species!

Kudos to Karen for her dedication and scientific goals.

# Club News and Save the Dates!

**2026 Clark Rogerson Foray:** September 4-7, 2026 (Labor Day Weekend) Camp Eisenberg, Copake, NY

Details TBA on their website: [comafungi.org](http://comafungi.org)

**2026 Samuel Ristich NEMF Foray:** July 30- August 2, 2026 Mont Alto, PA

Details TBA at [nemf.org](http://nemf.org)

## Time to Renew

It's that time of year again: time to renew your annual PVMA membership if you haven't done so already. We'll send out a reminder notice in early spring, but kindly consider renewing now to ensure you continue to receive all of the PVMA news and invitations to upcoming events. If you became a new member after October 1, 2025, then you are all set for this year! Renew online at [Membership | PVMA](#).

Your membership fees go directly to educational opportunities for members. We use these dues for honorariums for guest mycologists and speakers as well as for a generous scholarship fund for members to attend various regional forays.

## Get Involved

Are you interested in getting more involved with the club?

There are many roles available!

- Write/contribute content for the newsletter
- Assist at walks or lead a walk at a favorite trail
- Help with ID at club walks
- Come to a board meeting and see what we're all about
- Host a workshop or other event
- Suggest something new!

## Officer Elections

This spring, the office of Vice President will be up for election for a new term. Our Vice President, Peter Russell, has agreed to continue in this roles for another two years! You will receive a voting link by email in the coming weeks.

Kindly vote or share your write-in candidate when you receive the link.

## Summer Walks

Do you have a favorite trail you'd like to share with PVMA? We're always looking for club members who are willing to share their trails for our walk season.

The only requirements are that the location offer enough parking and that you are able to lead us safely back to our cars at the end of the walk!

Email [Peter Russell](#) to share your walk location.

# Fungi in the News

[Scientist wins 'Environment Nobel' for shedding light on hidden fungal networks](#)

[Fungal allies: Unsung heroes of seedling survival in subtropical forests](#)

[399 and counting: One man's quest to find Fresh Pond's fungi | GBH](#)

[A rare, parasitic 'fairy lantern' plant species was discovered in Malaysia. It might be critically endangered](#)

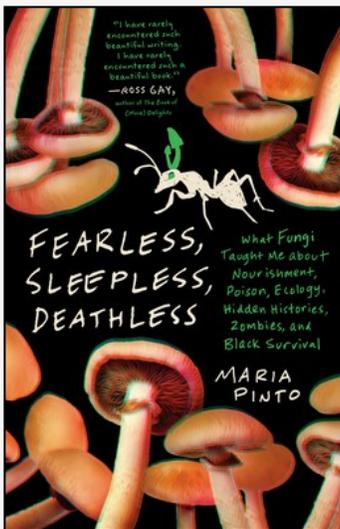
[Zombie fungus, 'living stones' among favorite botany discoveries of 2025 | Popular Science](#)

[Fungus 'rewires' maize plants, causing tumor-like growths by hijacking root formation process](#)

[California poisonous mushroom outbreak kills 3, sickens dozens: Officials](#)

[KU's living library of fungi, key to restoration and sustainability, threatened by shrinking federal funds – The Lawrence Times](#)

[How fungi 'superpowers' are restoring forests across the world](#)



## Recently Published

Naturalist, forager, and educator **Maria Pinto** offers a stunning debut book that uncovers strange and beautiful fungal connections between the natural and human worlds. She mingles reportage, research, memoir, and nature writing, touching on topics that range from Black farmers' domestication of the unforgettable aroma of truffles to the possibility that enslaved people wielded mycological poisons against their enslavers.

Pinto brings a new perspective and a distinctive literary voice to this mix of environmental and lived history, and every page sings with her enthusiasm for the networks in which we are embedded: fungal, ecological, ancestral, and communal. Join her in pursuit of beautiful, perplexing, delicious, and deadly mushrooms as she explores this understudied kingdom's awe-inspiring diversity and discovers how fungi have been used by people, especially those on the margins, for survival, pleasure, revelation, and revolution.

[Fearless, Sleepless, Deathless](#) at the University of North Carolina Press

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