



# SOMA News

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SONOMA COUNTY MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
A NON-PROFIT 501(c)(3) EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, DEDICATED TO THE MYSTERY AND APPRECIATION OF LOCAL FUNGI [SOMAmushrooms.org](http://SOMAmushrooms.org)

VOLUME 19 ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2006

## SPEAKER OF THE MONTH

### 2006 SEASON CALENDAR

#### SEPTEMBER

**September 21» Meeting**

Sonoma County Farm Bureau,  
Speaker: Charmoon Richardson,  
"Wild Culinary Mushrooms of  
Northern California"

**September 23 » Foray**

Fisk Mill Cove, Salt Point State Park

#### OCTOBER

**October 8-11 » 2006 Mushroom  
Conference**

Breitenbush Hot Springs Resort near  
Detroit, Oregon

**October 19 » Meeting**

Sonoma County Farm Bureau,  
Speaker: Dr. Joaquin Cifuentes  
Blanco

**October 21 » Foray**

Fisk Mill Cove, Salt Point State Park

#### NOVEMBER

**November 10-12 » Annual  
Mendocino Woodlands Foray**

Sponsored by the MSSF

**November 16 » Meeting**

Sonoma County Farm Bureau,  
Speaker: Ralph Metzner

**November 18 » Foray**

Fisk Mill Cove, Salt Point State Park



### Wild Culinary Mushrooms of Northern California

**Charmoon Richardson**

**Thursday, September 21**

Charmoon Richardson, owner of Wild About Mushrooms Co., has been collecting and studying wild mushrooms in northern California for over 30 years. Charmoon teaches classes on mushroom identification, cooking, and cultivation, is a past president of SOMA, organizes weekend mushroom camps and other mushroom events, and has led uncounted numbers of guided mushroom walks & forays.

He has appeared on national television with noted chef personality Bobby Flay, has been featured on statewide PBS, and has been the subject of numerous local and San Francisco Bay Area news feature articles and radio programs. Charmoon makes his home near Forestville, California.



#### EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING IDENTIFICATION

After seeking medical attention,  
contact Darvin DeShazer for  
identification at (707) 829-0596.  
Email your photos to  
[muscaria@pacbell.net](mailto:muscaria@pacbell.net).

A free service for hospitals,  
veterinarians and concerned  
citizens of Sonoma County.

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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### Spore Droppings from the President's Basket

We open our season with great hope that we may come close to last year's bounty in the field. The coming rains promise new adventures in the forest for mycophile, last year the season seemed to go on forever.

This year we begin with our own treasure, Charmoon Richardson as our first speaker and dreams of Chanterelles dancing in our heads on the first club foray of the new season.

This year also brings the birth of the Cultivation club; Jean Pierre will lead us in workshops and study groups to grow our favorites at home.

Also planned this year is our first SOMA retreat. In late October or early November we will invite SOMA members to participate in a comprehensive study session at Westminster Woods near Occidental. The half-day session will focus on SOMA and its future. This retreat is free to members and will include a luncheon and foray in the afternoon. As soon as we have a firm date I will notify you all by email through the SOMA Yahoo system.

My seven years with SOMA have given me a real sense of what a group of folks who share a passion for our sport can do. SOMA has at its heart good members that are dedicated to our club and give generously of their time and talent to our sport, mostly, we have fun and we eat and drink very well.

Our Winter Camp is the club's only fundraiser and a great fun-raiser, the culinary group has been tossing around great ideas to tickle our palate at meal time. We will have more activities this year and enjoy the ever improving CYO facility at the camp on MLK weekend in January.

Bill Hanson

## FORAY OF THE MONTH

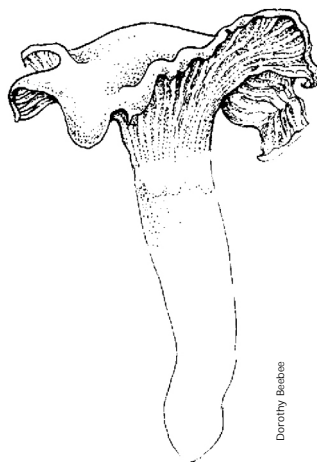
Saturday, September 23

Chanterelles, sulfur shelf and other early season edibles

Meet at the southern end of **Fisk Mill Cove** in **Salt Point State Park** at 10 AM.

Bring a potluck dish to share; vegetarian dishes are always welcome! Please bring your own glasses, plates and eating utensils. Besides the positive environmental reasons and benefit to the gastronomic experience, it will help minimize the amount of trash to be hauled out.

Contact foray leaders Ernst Muusse at (707) 592-6805, or Bill Wolpert at (707) 763-3101 for more information.



*Cantharellus cibarius*

Members are asked to avoid hunting the club site for at least two weeks prior to a SOMA event. It's only through your cooperation that all members can enjoy a successful foray and experience the thrill of the hunt!

## So, What is a "Mushroom Dye"?

The process of making a mushroom dye is basically quite simple: Chop up a mushroom, (fresh is best, but dried, or frozen will work well, too), put chopped pieces into a non-reactive pot (enamel or stainless steel) and cover it with water. Bring the mushroom dye up to a simmer, (preferably outdoors!) and if it contains any water-soluble pigment, it will immediately start to run in the hot water. Actually, just pouring some boiling water over a broken-up mushroom in a little glass jar will give you an instant clue. Some mushrooms contain more pigment than others, so sometimes you need very few mushrooms to make a good dye, and in others you need a whole lot of fungi! Experimentation and keeping notes is the key to success here. One little hint: since it seems that much of the pigment resides in the reproductive parts of the mushroom i.e. the gills, pores, or tubes, don't bother with any of the fungi which have white or pale gills, pores, or tubes—but of course there are always exceptions! That's half the fun of it! Mushrooms may be used most successfully to dye protein fibers, such as wool, silk, and mohair (even alpaca and llama!), or the harder to dye cellulose fibers such as cotton, and hemp, resulting in lighter hues.

It is possible to achieve a complete color wheel of extraordinary color from mushrooms with or without the use of a mordant. A "mordant" is a metallic salt that is commonly used by natural dyers to aid in the setting of a dye on fiber to make it light-fast and colorfast. Miriam C. Rice recommends the use of only two safe mordants: potassium alum and iron sulfate. These are available online from many fiber supply sources such as Dharma Trading Company.

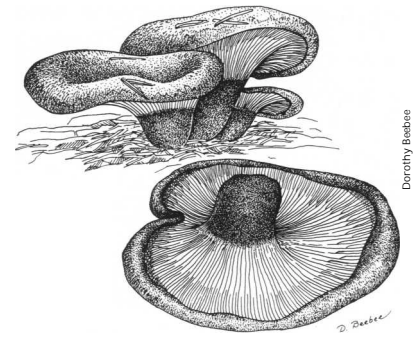
And how do we know all of this? We are indeed fortunate to have Miriam to thank for the discovery of mushroom dyes, and practically here in SOMA's own back yard! Miriam, an amazing artist living in Mendocino, CA, was a nationally known sculptor, batik artist and woodblock printer, before discovering in the early 1970s that fungi contain pigments that can be used as natural dyes.

It was while Miriam was teaching children about natural dyes in a class at the Mendocino Art Center, that she also began experimenting with natural dyes to make inks for her own block printing art. During that time, she attended a class called "Introduction to Mushrooms", taught by the late eminent S.F. Mycologist, Dr. Harry Thiers. Shortly thereafter, always eager to combine the best possibilities of both worlds, Miriam took a clump of fresh sulfur yellow *Hypholoma* (= *Naematoloma*) *fasciculare* ("Sulphur Tuft") mushrooms, and tossed them into a dye pot with a bit of wool yarn. Fortunately, for all of us, this action resulted in a clear bright lemon yellow dye and voila, "mushroom dyeing" was born!

After writing two books on the subject, *Let's Try Mushrooms for Color* (Thresh Publications, 1974) and *Mushrooms for Color* (Mad River Press, 1980), and collaborating on a third published in Sweden, she then discovered that she could use the leftover detritus from the dye pot to make mushroom paper! Always a passionate

advocate of "recycling", this seemed to be the natural solution for disposal of the fungal residue from the dye process. She experimented with many mushrooms for paper, but discovered that the best paper was made using the shelf mushrooms called polypores, apparently because of their high chitin content, in addition to the cellulose.

The use of both of these new fungal art forms has spread world wide from their origins 35 years ago in nearby Mendocino County, and mushroom dye and papermaking classes are now offered on a regular basis to participants at SOMA Camp.



*Paxillus*

International Mushroom Dye Symposia are also held around the world every two years, with the next one scheduled to meet in Mendocino, CA in January 2008—to celebrate Miriam's 90th birthday!

Miriam C. Rice, a SOMA member, has given lectures and demonstrations at SOMA meetings several times, as well as classes in mushroom dyes and polypore papermaking at several previous SOMA Camps. These classes now continue under the tutelage of SOMA members Dorothy Beebee (Mushroom Dyes) and Catherine Wesley (Polypore Papermaking).

See some local dye fungi fruiting right now!

We collect the fungi in Sonoma County year round, and are getting an early start this year with the fruiting of the "Dyer's Puffball" (*Pisolithus tinctorius*). This amazing fungus produces wonderful shades of deep dark red-brown-black on wool, silk and other protein fibers, when it is young and juicy, before the spores have matured. The less common *Paxillus atrotomentosus* has been recently collected at Salt Point and is promising to be a good source of the elusive blue dye.

We don't have to wait for the rains here in Sonoma County to get our dye pots stirring! Fog drip at Salt Point is a sufficient incentive for some of our dye fungi. Next on the "dye fungi-to-be-found" list will be *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, (a.k.a. the "Dyers Polypore") often seen at or near the base of dying (no pun intended) Douglas Fir trees, around October, and probably even sooner on the coast thanks to that fog drip. This is one of the best sources of brilliant yellow colorfast mushroom dye that Miriam discovered more than 35 years ago, and it is quite prolific in Sonoma County. Keep your eyes open for that telltale yellow "burble" soon to be seen on the floor of Sonoma County mixed conifer/hardwood forests! The mushroom dye season is just getting started!

## Article Excerpt: Truffle hounds now rooting 'down under'

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**T**ruffle cultivation is once again in the news. The following excerpt from *The Christian Science Monitor* features Australia's latest success:

By Nick Squires, Correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS, AUSTRALIA – Pickles the truffle hound is having a bad day. The English springer spaniel scampers up and down rows of hazel and oak saplings, sniffing for the precious black treasure which lies hidden beneath the ground. The 550 trees were planted only five years ago and are barely waist-high.

But this year, in their first harvest, they have already produced 6 kilograms (13.2 pounds) of black Perigord truffles - the sort that are normally found in France.

"Find truffles, Pickles, find truffles," urges the dog's owner, Duncan Garvey, weaving between trees. The conditions are ideal for snuffling out truffles - there's no wind, the sun is shining, and the view extends across the valleys and timbered ridges of the Southern Highlands, a region two hours' drive from Sydney.

Not content with taking on the French at winemaking, Australia is now muscling in on the hallowed Gallic tradition of truffle growing. Just as Australian wine has won grudging acclaim from European vintners, the Aussies now aim to produce fragrant fungi every bit as good as those from the oak forests of France and Italy.

When Pickles stops beside a hazel bush, Mr. Garvey kneels down and digs away at the soil with a knife and his bare hands. But it's a false alarm - the dark earth reveals nothing more than stones and bits of old root. The search resumes.

Garvey, an agricultural economist, is the antipodean "Mr. Truffle." He first started trying to cultivate the famed

Perigord truffle in Tasmania more than a decade ago. The first "black diamond," as the French call them, was plucked triumphantly from the ground in 1999.

Since then around 55 truffières, or truffle plantations, have been established in Tasmania and in the mainland states of New South Wales and Victoria.

Many of them sell their truffles to Garvey, who takes a cut and then markets them to restaurants in cities like Melbourne and Sydney for a hefty US\$2,300 a kilo.

The success of the experiment has brought a touch of Provence and Perigord to upland regions of southeastern Australia, where conditions most resemble those of Europe's truffle-growing areas.

But there are peculiar challenges to cultivating truffles down under. "Wombats were climbing in over the fence," says plantation owner Bill deCorsie, referring to the lumbering, bear-like marsupials that excavate big burrows in the surrounding hillsides. "I had to adjust the height of the electrified wire to stop them getting in."

Scattered droppings are a sign that kangaroos are also regular visitors, although, so far, none of the marsupials has done much damage to the saplings.

Truffle cultivation is a tricky business. The fungi grow on tree roots a few inches beneath the ground. Trees are infected with the tuber *melanosporum fungus*, specially imported from France, then planted in chalky soil and left to mature for five years. "It's a gamble," Mr. deCorsie, a former builder, cheerfully admits. "You might get nothing at all at the end of it."

To read the entire article on truffle cultivation in Australia, visit: [www.csmonitor.com/2006/0830/p01s03-woap.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0830/p01s03-woap.html).

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### MSSF Mendocino Woodlands Foray

This year's new and improved MSSF Mendocino Woodlands Foray will take place on the weekend of November 10-12, at the Mendocino Woodlands camp, in the hills above the town of Mendocino.

Dr. Dennis Desjardin will be the foray mycologist, assisted by Norm Andresen and Mike Wood. Noted mycophotographer Taylor Lockwood will present a special selection of mushroom visuals. Additional guests of note will be announced.

A variety of classes, workshops, and special events will be featured, including a kid's foray. Fee includes lodging, meals, and all forays, classes, and events.

Further details to be announced on the MSSF website. Register at [www.mssf.org/mendo](http://www.mssf.org/mendo). Email [mendo@mssf.org](mailto:mendo@mssf.org) or call (415) 457-7662 or (707) 829-2063.

### 23rd Annual Breitenbush Mushroom Gathering

The 2006 Mushroom Conference will feature the edible mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest. Expert mycologists Paul Kroeger and Judy Roger will instruct on the identification of delicious wild mushrooms and professional chef Michael Blackwell and Patrice Benson will lead workshops and lecture on the preparation and preservation of the edible fungi of forest and field.

The event also includes guided field trips, lectures and Marie Heerken's art of myco pyrography workshop. Maggie Rogers will present the cookbooks and field guides available to inspire and assist mushroom chefs and identification students.

For reservations and info, call (503) 854-3320.

## SOMA Membership Application and Renewal Form

### THE SOMA PLEDGE

Regardless of what others may think of me, I wish to become a member of the **Sonoma County Mycological Association**; a non-profit 501(c)(3), educational society, dedicated to the mystery and appreciation of local fungi.

NAME

DATE

STREET or P.O. BOX

APARTMENT #

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

HOME

WORK

EMAIL

- New member
- Please change my mailing label and membership roster info
- Please do not release my information outside of the club

Please indicate below, any particular areas of interest or committee functions you may like to serve:

Membership dues are \$20 per household, and run a full fiscal year from time of application or from the date of expiration if renewing early. Please make checks payable to SOMA.

Return this form with your check to:

SOMA  
P.O. BOX 73  
Cotati, CA 94931-0073

Check out the **SOMA website**  
for fabulous member benefits!

[SOMAmushrooms.org](http://SOMAmushrooms.org)

## Astraeus Species Wanted for Biomedical Research

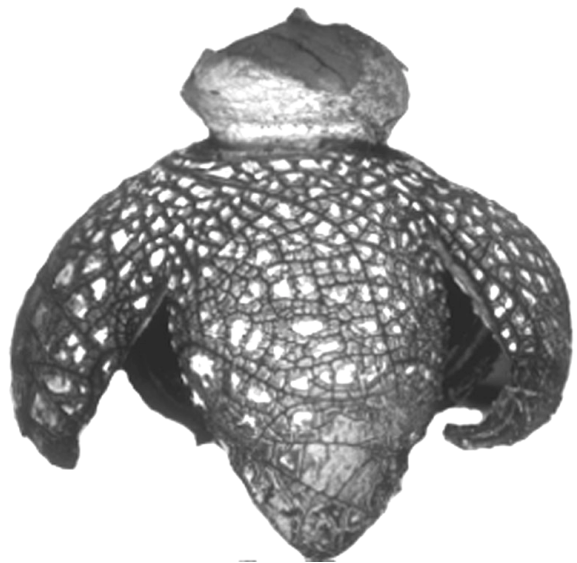
Once again the fungi show their importance to mankind! Extracts of *Astraeus pteridis* have shown exceptionally strong suppression of certain human pathogenic bacteria in collaborative research by Drs. Samir Ross of the University of Mississippi and Jim Trappe of Oregon State University. Suppliers of specimens will be gratefully acknowledged in any publications that result from this research.

Substantial quantities of specimens are needed to follow up the exciting results of their preliminary studies. Ross and Trappe solicit dried specimens of both *A. pteridis* and *A. hygrometricus*. Send them to:

Jim Trappe  
Forestry Sciences Laboratory  
3200 Jefferson Way  
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

*Astraeus spp.* resemble earth stars in the genus *Geastrum*, but their spore sacs are sessile, sitting flush on the cracked, inner peridium. The peridium opens as star-like rays to expose the spore sac in wet weather (see the figure), but the rays close around the spore sac in dry weather.

*A. hygrometricus* is about 2–4 cm broad and rounded when the rays are closed, the “star” is 4–6 cm broad and sometimes up to 9 cm when the rays are open. *A. pteridis* can be even larger.



An opened specimen of *Astraeus pteridis*



## SOMA News

P.O. BOX 73  
Cotati, CA 94931-0073

### SOMA Members

The September Issue of  
**SOMA News** has arrived!

SOMA usually meets on the third Thursday of the month throughout the year (September through May), at 7:00 PM, at the **Sonoma County Farm Bureau**, 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa, California.

Fungi are displayed at 7:00 PM, and speakers begin at 7:45 PM. Bring in your baffling fungi to be identified!

### Directions to the Sonoma County Farm Bureau

#### Coming from the south

- Go north on **Highway 101**.
- Past Steele Lane, take the **Bicentennial Way** exit.
- Go over **Highway 101**.
- Turn right on **Range Avenue**.
- Turn left on **Piner Road**.
- At about 1/4 mile, turn left into parking lot at **970 Piner Road**.

#### Coming from the north

- Go south on **Highway 101**.
- Take the first Santa Rosa exit, **Mendocino Avenue**.
- Stay on the frontage road, (it becomes Cleveland Avenue after you cross Industrial Drive).
- Turn right on **Piner Road**.
- At about 1/4 mile, turn left into parking lot at **970 Piner Road**.

970 Piner Road is marked by a star on the map at right.

