

# MAGIC<sub>8</sub>

(Psychedelic)

# MUSHROOMS

Of Pennsylvania  
and the Northeast



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of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic*

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## INTRODUCTION AND WARNINGS

**Most of the mushrooms described in the booklet are illegal to possess. Simply holding a specimen of a psilocybin species in your hand can be a serious crime. Do not collect these mushrooms.**

**Inexperienced people who collect magic mushrooms from the wild often make mistakes in identification. Some of these look-alike species are toxic, even deadly poisonous. Do not collect psilocybin mushrooms.**

**People who overdose, or are unfamiliar with these species and eat them by mistake, may panic over the intense and dazzling psychedelic experiences. If this should happen to someone near you, reassure them they are not poisoned or going crazy, and that all will be back to normal soon. Do not eat these mushrooms.**

In my wild mushroom talks and walks sessions, I get many questions about local magic mushrooms. I have written this booklet that I hope will answer some of these. Of the dozen or so identified magic mushrooms that appear in Pennsylvania, this publication describes 9 of the most commonly found. Each of these species is described in detail.

Mushroom field guides from the late 1800s into the mid 1900s described mind-altering mushrooms species to be merely intoxicating, and even poisonous. Those designations changed in the mid 1950s. That's when explorers discovered that these species have been – and still are – used by indigenous shamans and mystics for thousands of years around the world. The mushrooms were used for communicating with spirits, acquiring hidden knowledge, seeing the Divine, and much more.

So, the consciousness-expanding experience of “magic” mushrooms is not like the mind-numbing effects of alcohol that the old field guides implied by calling these species “intoxicating”. Instead, they open the mind's window of perception.

But those old time authorities were not completely wrong about the poisonous properties of these strange fungi. Although no known local psychedelic species is life-threatening to a healthy adult, the intense bitterness can sometimes cause nausea with brief vomiting episodes. At least one species described in this booklet, however, is quite poisonous if improperly used. It can put a careless experimenter in bed for a day.

Ignoring the risks, underground experimenters everywhere are investigating the remarkable effects of psilocybin mushrooms. The “trip” can last up to about eight hours. Because of the intensity of the experience, most repeat it infrequently. It's widely believed that the mushrooms are not habit-forming, and are safe to the body and mind if occasionally used.

Experienced psilocybin cosmonauts know that the proper mind set and surroundings are important to insure a positive experience. That's why new experimenters should have an experienced guide to help them along their cosmic journey.

“One of these days you’re going to have a visitation...”  
(K. Kesey)

# Fly Mushroom

*Amanita muscaria*

(am-an-E-tah mus-CARE-ee-ah)

Has also been called: Fly, Fly Agaric, Fly Poison



Because of its beauty, striking appearance, and often huge size, the Fly Mushroom is admired across the world. It’s a favorite fungus of artists, craftsmen, and designers. Along with such ordinary things as kitchen towels and tee shirts, many of my childhood illustrated fairy tale books displayed images of the Fly. Most representations of the mushroom show a bright red cap. In this region, however, the cap is yellow to orange – although I have heard of the red capped variety occasionally appearing here. But there’s more to this mushroom than an attention-grabbing appearance: it has mind-bending properties when properly prepared and ingested.

The Fly mushroom’s psychoactive effects are not like those of the other magic mushroom species in this booklet. That’s because it does not contain psilocybin. Its psychoactive agents (ibotenic acid and muscimol) are not on law enforcement’s no-no list. So, unlike the other most magical fungi species, the Fly mushroom is legal to use. Practically all field guides, however, call it poisonous. But many authorities feel its toxicity dangers are overrated.

You may have heard that Siberian shamans eat this mushroom to enter a magical trance state. They by-pass the toxic properties by drying the young caps

before consuming. Under its influence, they believe they can communicate with divine spirits, or descend to lower worlds and talk with the dead. Also, they feel the mushroom gives them the physical strength of a Goliath and the all-knowing mind of a god. Another effect is an Alice in Wonderland-like sense of growing taller or shorter.

Experimenters say that eating one medium-size dry young cap typically produces a light mind-warping effect. 2 to 6 medium size caps cause mild to strong results. Initial sensations come in 30 to 120 minutes after ingesting. The trip can last 5 to 10 hours, depending somewhat on the size of the dose. Some report feeling certain of the Fly's consciousness-altering effects for days afterward.

A good Fly trip usually includes euphoric feelings and a need to sleep. The experience, however, often has side effects, such as sweating, nausea, twitching and auditory or visual hallucinations. Bad trips include these disturbances along with feelings of depression.

The Fly Mushroom is named for the way it stupefies flies. A fresh cap steeped in a saucer of milk can attract every fly in the house to come for a drink. Because the brew makes them sluggish, they are blissfully easy to swat.

If you have pets, leave the Fly Mushroom in the woods. Cats are attracted to it, especially as the mushroom dries. They, and maybe dogs too, can die from eating it. Keep it away from small children in the random grazing stage. They may be very sensitive to the mushroom's toxins.

**BASICS:** LARGE YELLOW TO ORANGE CAPPED MUSHROOMS WITH LARGE WHITE WARTS ON THE CAP. WHITE GILLS. A RING ON A WHITE STEM, AND A SCALY BULB AT THE BASE OF THE STEM. GROWS ON THE GROUND, USUALLY UNDER TREES.

**CAP:** 2" to 10" across. Often shown as bright red-colored, but the variety in our region is yellow to orange. Smooth, and dotted with large, white, cottage cheese-like spots.

**GILLS:** White. Free from the stem.

**SPORE PRINT:** White. **SIZE:** 9-13 x 6-8  $\mu$ .

**STEM:** 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long,  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. White. With a ring, and with a scaly bulb at the base.

**GROWTH:** Scattered on the ground in woods or under trees. Sometimes growing in fairy rings around the trunk of a tree. July to October.

**LOOKALIKES:** *Amanita flavoconia* has yellowish, not white, patches on the cap. *A. flavorubescens* stains reddish at the base of the stem. Do not eat these species. Edible *A. jacksonii* has a soft, white cup at the base of the stem. None of these copycats are psychoactive.

Be aware of deadly poisonous *Amanita* species if you intend to experiment with the Fly mushroom. Do not eat it unless you know how to recognize the killers.

“Reality is a crutch for people who can’t cope with drugs.”  
(Lily Tomlin)

# Big Laughing Jim

*Gymnopilus junonius*

(jim-NAWP-ill-us june-OWN-ee-us)

Also called *Gymnopilus spectabilis*, Jimmie, Laughing mushroom.



When you think that mushrooms are as weird as they can be, along comes Big Laughing Jim. If we had a scale for strangeness, the Jimmie would be near the top, because it has the remarkable reputation of making people laugh when they eat it. Although this psychedelic mushroom grows around much of the world, it seems to be "active" in only certain places, such as Japan and the eastern US. That region includes Pennsylvania – to the delight of some and the horror of others.

The reported effects of small to moderate doses of our local Jimmie range from giggles to raucous hilarity, with brilliant color perceptions, along with a mellow, delightful euphoria. However, the species' psychedelic effects can be unpredictable, depending on who consumes the mushroom, their state of mind, age of the mushrooms, amount consumed, biochemical balance of the specimens, and probably other factors.

For a mild, but distinctly noticeable effect, daring experimenters make a tea by gently boiling 10 grams of finely chopped, dried Jimmie, or 100 grams of the fresh, young mushroom in about 2 cups of water for about 20 minutes. The brew is nauseatingly bitter, but adding honey and cinnamon makes it taste a bit better. Including some fresh ginger reportedly helps to reduce the nausea. Rather than gulping the tea, they sip it slowly over about 15 minutes.

The chemical nature of this variable mushroom has not been deeply studied. "Active" forms, however, usually contain psilocybin, which makes possession

illegal. Also, it has components found in kava: a legal mind-altering herb of Polynesia. Other yet-to-be identified biochemical agents that contribute to its peculiar effects may also be present. Experimenters know that the amount and ratios of these biochemical agents can vary every time they find the Jimmie. Because the psychedelic effects can be so variable, they recommend other magic species with more predictable effects for beginners.

Many field guides call this species poisonous. But a vast network of underground cosmonauts believes that – aside from possible vomiting caused by its intensely bitter and nauseating taste – the mushroom is not physically dangerous to consume. As for any magic mushroom, however, the temporary disorientation and alteration of reality perception from a strong dose can cause panic for susceptible individuals.

*Gymnopilus* species can be difficult to identify. Besides the legal problems, confusing this mushroom with dangerous lookalikes is a risk to mushroomers, especially novices.

**BASICS:** BIG, INTENSELY BITTER, YELLOW-ORANGE MUSHROOMS, ON LIVE OR DEAD HARDWOOD. OFTEN GROWS IN CLUSTERS. STEM HAS A RING. ORANGE SPORE PRINT.

**CAP:** 2" to 7" across. Bright orange-yellow. Thick. Surface smooth, but scaly with age. Edge often rolled under when young. With an anise or liquorice odor. Internal flesh is yellow. Intensely bitter-tasting.

**GILLS:** Pale yellow to rusty. Attached to the stem, and sometimes running down it.

**SPORE PRINT:** Rusty-orange. **SIZE:** 7-10 x 4.5–6  $\mu$ . Roughened.

**STEM:** 1¼" to 8" long, ½" to 1⅛" thick. Pale yellow to yellow-orange. Showing a prominent ring when young, and often merely a rusty-colored ring zone when older. Sometimes swollen in the middle. Streaked with small thread-like fibers.

**GROWTH:** On both dead and living deciduous and conifer wood. Can appear singly, but usually grows in clusters. July to October.

**EDIBILITY:** Illegal to possess because it contains banned psychedelic components. Its intense bitterness can be nauseating, and cause vomiting.

**LOOKALIKES:** Bitter tasting *Gymnopilus luteus* is more yellow, and often has a skinnier stem. Mild-tasting *G. validipes* has dark rusty scales over its cap surface. Both species are psychedelic. The edible Honey Mushroom, *Armillaria mellea*, and the poisonous Jack 'O Lantern (*Ompalotus olearius*) both make a white spore prints. *Pholiota* species make brown spore prints. The Deadly Galerina (*Galerina marginata*) is much smaller than the Big Laughing Jim, and can grow at the same time and in the same places. It makes a rusty-brown, not bright rusty-orange, spore print. It contains deadly poisons similar to the Destroying Angel (*Amanita bisporigera*)

Any kind of consciousness that is not related to the production or consumption of material goods is stigmatized in our society.

(Graham Hancock)

# Yellow Gymnopilus

*Gymnopilus luteus*

(jim-no-PILE-us LOO-tee-us)



Also called *Pholios Luteus*, Yellow Jimmie, Yellow Laughing Jim  
The effects as its close relative, the Big Laughing Jim (*Gymnopilus junonius*). Unfortunately, both are as nauseatingly bitter-tasting. Fortunately, that distinctive flavor helps to separate them from certain “inactive” lookalikes. It only takes a nibble to check the taste, but that little bite could get you into legal trouble: it could be construed as eating an illegal mushroom, even if you spit out the nibble. Are you seeing the difficulties in studying magic species?

Sometimes, both of these Jim species show blue bruises when roughly handled. Many say this bruising test is a must for an active Jim species. Not so, say others. They believe those specimens showing no bluing reaction could be just a potent as those that bruise brightly blue. Only daring to eat them will tell.

Also, many contend the intensity of the blue color from bruising indicates the power of psychedelic mushrooms. That color test may be true for other magic species. But it's another undependable potency test for both the Yellow and Big Laughing Jims. It seems that strains of these two Jim species that show no blue bruising can send you off on the same kind of cosmic hellbender at those that show bright blue colors. Yes, these are strange species.

Often, mushroomers have trouble distinguishing between the Big Laughing Jim and the Yellow Jim. One good test is to measure spore size: Big Laughing Jim has bigger spores. But you need a laboratory quality microscope of at least 1,000x magnification. Many amateurs do not have one of these.

For novices, many experienced fungus trippers would not recommend starting with this mushroom. Like its close relative, the Laughing Jim described in this publication, they feel it's effects and strength are too unpredictable. Instead, they are likely to recommend going to your nearest horse/cattle farm and look for Belted Panaeolus mushrooms (*Panaeolus cinctulus*). This species is probably the most common psilocybin mushroom in the US. It's easy to identify, and more likely to give a smoother, more predictable experience..

**BASICS:** BIG, INTENSELY BITTER, YELLOW MUSHROOMS, GROWING ON LIVE OR DEAD HARDWOOD. OFTEN GROWS IN CLUSTERS. STEM HAS A RING.

**CAP:** 2" to 4" across. Dull yellow to orange-yellow. Stains orange-brownish or sometimes bluish-green where injured or on age. Smooth and dry-looking. Sweet, spicy odor. Internal flesh is yellow. Intensely bitter-tasting.

**GILLS:** Attached to the stem, sometimes with a depression or notch at the stem; close; pale yellow, becoming rust-red with maturity.

**SPORE PRINT:** Bright rusty-orange. **SIZE:** 6-9 x 4.5-5.5  $\mu$ ; Finely roughened, elliptical.

**STEM:** 1¼" to 8" long, ½" to ½" thick. Colored like the cap. but developing rusty stains when handled or with age. Sometimes bruises green or light blue at the base. Usually has a ring near the cap. Finely hairy. Often swollen in the lower regions, like bowling pin.

**GROWTH:** On both dead and living deciduous and conifer wood. Can appear singly, but usually grows in clusters. August to October.

**LOOKALIKES:** *Gymnopilus junonius* is very similar. If you have a laboratory quality microscope, you can separate the two species by spore size: *G. Junonius* spores are bigger. Poisonous Jack O' Lantern (*Onphalotus olearus*) is similar, but has no ring on the stem and makes white spore print.



Lookalike Jack O' Lantern mushroom. POISONOUS!



The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.  
(W.B. Yeats)

# Lawn Mower's Mushroom

(*Panaeolina foenisecii*)

(pan-ee-oh-LEEN-ah fayne-eh-SEK-ee-eye)

Also called *Panaeolus foenisecii*, *Psathyrella foenisecii* and *Psilocybe foenisecii*.



When we mow our lawns in this region we do something terrible to this widespread, plentifully growing little species: we cut off its head. So it seems only fair that this mushroom does something, perhaps a bit kinder, to our heads – such as sending us off on a (illegal) magical trip when we eat it.

The reality of this gift, however, is debatable. Old and current authorities have a wide range of opinions about it. Some call it a psychedelic species. Some say it's poisonous. Others say it's a safe and delicious edible, with no toxic or mind-affecting properties.

When I was a youngster, the only field guide I owned listed the Mowers Mushroom a safe, even choice, edible species. I enjoyed eating it every year whenever it showed up in my lawn. Although I learned of its potentially risky properties later on, I have continued eating it, more cautiously now, for decades. Never have I, or my family, experienced anything but a delicious spring treat.

A number of modern authorities consider this mushroom edible, but others disagree. I have found no reports of poisonings from this species. But, although I know of no one who experienced problems from eating it, we must always respect the consensus of modern authorities. If you choose to experiment, be cautious. And be careful with your identification; Lawn Mower's Mushrooms resemble certain poisonous species. This is not an edible mushroom for novices.

It can take a bit of time and study to confidently recognize this little brown mushroom. Fortunately, its appearance in early spring and growth in grassy places and lawns, are features to help to separate it from the many similar looking species.

Some collections of this mushroom may contain tiny amounts of psilocybin, apparently too low to affect you. But it may show up in chemical tests that could cause legal trouble for you.

Make sure both your lawn and manure-growing magic mushroom are not growing from underground wood. Certain similar-looking wood-growers are not to be consumed. For example, the Deadly Galerina mushroom (*Galerina marginata*) is extremely dangerous. For example, I know of someone whose dog nibbled some specimens of this species last year. The mushrooms were growing in the backyard lawn from some scattered woodchips. The doggy did not survive the meal.

**BASICS:** SMALL MUSHROOMS WITH BROWN, BELL-SHAPED CAPS THAT CAN DEVELOP LIGHT AND DARK COLORED BANDS WHEN DRYING. STEM THIN, FRAGILE, WITHOUT A RING. DARK BROWN SPORE PRINT. GROWS IN GRASS.

**CAP:** ½" to 1" across. Bell-shaped. Pale when dry, but brown when moist, often showing both colors as bands when partially dry.

**GILLS:** Brown, attached to the stem.

**SPORES:** Dark brown. **SIZE:** 12-15 X 6.5-9 μ

**STEM:** Up to ⅛" thick, 2" to 3" long. Fragile, brittle, and hollow. Pale brownish. No ring.

**GROWTH:** Very common. Scattered in lawns and other grassy places, not on dung. May to October.

**LOOKALIKES:** *Conocybe* species have cinnamon-brown to rusty-brown spores, not dark brown. They tend to be more fragile, delicate and shorter lived than the Mower's Mushroom. The Deadly Cone Head, (*Conocybe filaris*) is extremely poisonous. It has a distinct ring about halfway up the stem. Certain *Panaeolus* species, such as the similar-looking, psychedelic *P. cinctulus*, grows with dung, and has black spores.



Non-edible Milky Cone Head (*Conocybe lactea*) is very fragile, and makes a reddish spore print.

“I’m not crazy about reality, but it’s still the only place to get a decent meal.”  
(Groucho Marx)

## Belted Panaeolus

*Panaeolus cinctulus*



Belted Panaeolus growing, of all places, in an Amish vegetable garden.

This is the most common magic mushroom in this region.

Although dear to the hearts of magic mushroom hunters, the Belted Panaeolus is a nuisance when it grows as a weed in commercial Button Mushroom farms. If it’s accidentally included in commercial products it can cause problems for consumers, because this species can pack a psychedelic wallop. If less than about 1 gram dried, or about ½ oz fresh is eaten, the effects are usually imperceptible. However, 3-5 grams dried, or about 1 oz fresh can cause a consciousness-expanding experience, often eight hours long, with wild hallucinations that can be frightening to an unsuspecting consumer.

Although illegal, it continues to be popular around the world with underground psychedelic mushroom experimenters. From clinical studies with human volunteers, it apparently offers a more tranquil, elevated, and meditative experience and less likely to cause discomforts than certain other commonly used magic mushrooms. Some adventurers prefer to dry it and make a tea with honey and ginger to reduce possible temporary nausea.

However, this mushroom’s psychedelic properties can be as variable as its appearance. Each new patch of it we find can have its own level of potency and range of consciousness-altering effects. Most experimenters have pleasant ecstatic and visual experiences, but a few report mild to strong nausea with uncomfortable restlessness. Besides the quirky psychoactive effects, each time we find it, it can display its own variation of size and color. These diversities may represent distinct

varieties of the species, or perhaps the Belted Panaeolus is a complex of closely related species. DNA studies will tell us.

Because it's typically gentle nature, this species is often recommended as the best choice for beginners determined to have a magical experience. Certain other active species, such as *Psilocybe cubensis*, sometimes cause unpleasant off-the-wall physical agitations over a number of hours.

**BASICS:** BROAD, CONE-SHAPED, TANNED LEATHER-COLORED CAP WITH A CENTRAL KNOB, AND WITH A DARKER ZONE ALONG THE EDGE. BROWN GILLS. FUZZY, REDDISH-BROWN STEM. GROWS IN ROTTING HAY AND MANURED PLACES.

**CAP:** 1 ¼" to 2" across. Broad cone-shaped, becoming flatter with age, with a knob in the center. Moist. Smooth. Dark red-brown when moist, whitish when dry. Often with a dark band along the edge as the cap dries.

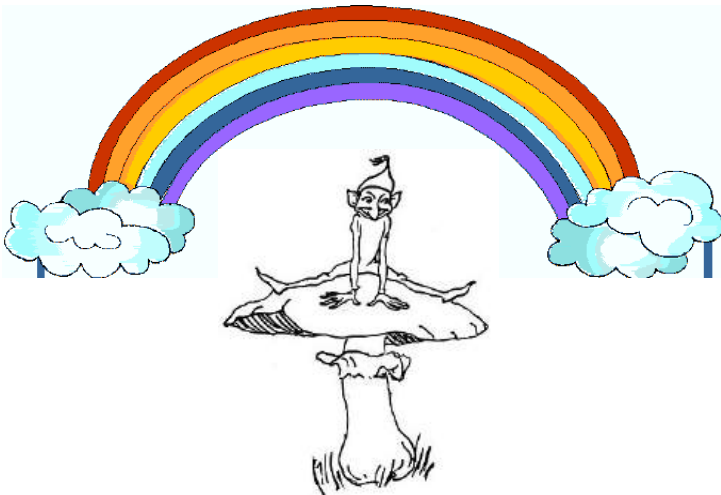
**GILLS:** Attached to the stem. Brownish when young, black later, with a mottled appearance.

**SPORE PRINT:** Black. **SIZE:** 11-14 x 7-9 μ

**STEM:** 1½" to 4" long, ⅛" to ¼" thick. Reddish-brown to paler. Covered with whitish hairs or powdery. Sometimes bruises blue at the base.

**GROWTH:** densely clumped on compost piles, well-fertilized lawns and gardens, and rarely, directly on horse dung. Very common everywhere. June-July.

**LOOKALIKES:** The possibly hallucinogenic Lawn Mowers' Mushroom (*Psathyrella foenicii*) grows in grass, mainly lawns. It makes a deep brown to blackish-brown spore print, not black. A number of other manure and grass-growing species resemble the Belted Panaeolus.



“There are things known and things unknown. In between are the doors of perception.”  
(Aldous Huxley)

# Bell-cap Panaeolus

*Panaeolus papilionaceus*

(pan-ee-OWE-lus pap-ill-ee-oh-NAY-see-us)

Also called: *Panaeolus campanulatus*, *Panaeolus retirugis*, and *Panaeolus sphinctrinus*



One of the most frequent questions I hear when I lead a mushroom walk is, “Will we find any psychedelic mushrooms?” If I reply, “Not likely”, I sometimes end up with only a few participants. Nevertheless, I know several wild mushroom experts whose interest was originally sparked by the prospect of finding magic mushrooms.

Some strains of the manure-growing Bell-cap Panaeolus may be mildly psychedelic, although authorities disagree. Many who have sampled it in large quantities report nothing other than occasional nausea. Others claim to have had consciousness-altering experiences: perhaps the product of wishful thinking and the power of imagination. Bur maybe not.

The mushroom is not hard to identify from its manure-growing habitat, bell-shaped cap bordered with little white fragments, mottled gray gills, a ringless thin stem, and black spore print. You’ll find it frequently in the summer if you like to hang out in pastures and poke through horse droppings and cow patties. For most of us, that’s a bizarre pastime, but not for a psychedelic mushroom hunter. It’s astounding what fascinates some people.

In warm and moist weather, manure and manured soil can sprout a wide variety of little brown mushroom species. Some of these can be difficult to identify. My Amish friend uses a lot of horse and cow manure in his organic agriculture, so lots of small fungi grow in his vegetable garden and around his barn.

Sometimes he invites me to his farm to identify the species growing there, because his son is very interested in fungi. In exchange for my mushroom help, he often gives me a big bag of manure – a treasure for a backyard vegetable gardener, but maybe less than useless to someone who has no way to use it. Spreading it in my garden usually brings on a menagerie of small mushrooms. I can blow away a weekend trying to identify some of these.

**BASICS:** SMALL, MANURE-GROWING MUSHROOM WITH A GRAY-BROWN, BELL-SHAPED CAP. LITTLE WHITE TOOTH-LIKE FRAGMENTS HANG ALONG THE CAP EDGE. GILLS MOTTLED BLACK AND GRAY. LONG, SKINNY STEM WITHOUT A RING. BLACK SPORE PRINT.

**CAP:** ¼" to 2" wide. Bell-shaped. Grayish-brown. Smooth. Little tooth-like white fragments hang along the edge.

**GILLS:** Attached to the stem, and depressed where they meet the stem. Gray, becoming mottled black from the spores. With whitish edges.

**SPORE PRINT:** Black. **SIZE:** 13-16 x 8-11 μ

**STEM:** 2½" to 5½" long, ⅛" to ¼" thick. Colored like the cap. Slightly fuzzy. Brittle. Without a ring.

**GROWTH:** On cow and horse manure. June to September.

**LOOKALIKES:** Non-psychedelic Semi-ovate *Panaeolus* (*Panaeolus semiovatus*) is bigger, pale, and has a ring on the stem. It's edible for some, but has caused nausea and vomiting for others.



A nice group of Bell Caps photographed by my manure-exploring friend, Joey Korn.

“The interior of our skulls contains a portal to infinity.”

(Grant Morrison)

## Blue-foot Psilocybe



Tiny, obscure, hard to notice, and illegal! If you spend much time in the woods, you have probably unknowingly walked by this mushroom many times, unless you are on your toes. A primary feature that helps to distinguish it from the many similar-looking species is the bluish color at the base of its stem. That's why it's called Blue Foot. But you have to look closely to see this feature.

It may be a small psychedelic species, but this little tripper has about the same potency, by weight, as *Psilocybe cubensis*, the sweetheart of home magic mushroom growers. One large Blue Foot mushroom, reportedly, gives a light psychedelic dose. 3 mushrooms brings on a much stronger experience. Like the Cube, it is about 10x more potent when dehydrated. So about 2 g dried is a moderate dose, and 5 g to 6 g brings on a full blast experience

Compared to the Cube, users say that the Blue Foot experience is smoother, with fewer distracting physical effects. They also report that it's more likely to arouse emotional feelings, and produce out-of-body experiences. Both species typically cause a 6 to 8 hour long trip.

This region hosts only a few more magic mushrooms than this booklet includes. But the West Coast has a larger choice of psychoactive species. If

eastern mushroomers sought these out with the fungal fervor of some of my western friends, we might have a bigger selection here. If you want to be such an explorer, start pinching the stems of unidentified mushrooms you find in the woods, and watch for a bluing reaction. But remember that not all bluing fungi are magical, such as certain bolete species.

**BASICS:** GROWS ON DEAD WOOD. YELLOWISH TO CINNAMON-COLORED CAP THAT BRUISES BLUE WHEN HANDLED. DARK GILLS. WHITISH STEM, BLUISH AT THE BASE, AND BRUISES BLUE WHEN HANDLED

**CAP:** 3/8" to 1 3/8" wide. Yellowish to cinnamon brown. Flattish. Sticky when moist. Shiny when dry.

**GILLS:** Brownish to rusty-cinnamon. Attached to the stem.

**SPORE PRINT:** Dark purplish-brown. **SIZE:** 7-10 x 4-5µ.

**STEM:** 1 1/4" to 2 3/8" long, up to 1/8" thick. Whitish, bluish at base. Without a ring. Stains blue to bluish-green when handled.

**GROWTH:** Singly or small clusters, on dead wood, especially birch, beech and maple. August to October.

**LOOKALIKES:** Deadly Galerina (*Galerina marginata*) makes a rusty colored spore print, not purplish-brown, grows on dead wood, and has a ring on the stem. It is a killer, and a threat to novice magic mushroom hunters. Poisonous (to many people) Sulfur Tuft (*Naematoloma fasciculare*) is a small yellow-capped wood-growing mushroom with greenish gills. It does not bruise bluish. Many other small pale to brownish mushrooms grow on dead wood. Some of these can be difficult to identify. A mushroom with greenish gills. It does not bruise bluish. Many other small pale to brownish mushrooms grow on dead wood. Some of these can be difficult to identify.

**Magic mushroom hunters must not mistake the wood-growing Deadly Galerina (*Galerina marginata*) for the Blue Foot mushroom. This innocent-looking little killer is one our most dangerous wild fungi. It has the same poisons as the notorious Destroying Angel (*Amanita bisporigera*). Get to know both of these bad characters so you can identify them on sight. Don't let the trip you take to be your last one**



Deadly Galerina





“There is a charm about the forbidden that makes it unspeakably desirable.”  
(Mark Twain)

# Common Large Psilocybe

*Psilocybe cubensis*

(sigh-LAW-sib-ee cue-BEN-sis)

Other names: Cube, San Isidro, Jail Bait Mushroom



You're not likely to find this species growing wild in Pennsylvania - yet.

However, this notorious species grows very commonly on manure in tropical pastures around the world, and in the southern US states. Warmer summers are pushing it farther northward. Last I heard, it appeared in southern North Carolina. If the climate trend continues, the mushroom could become a familiar species throughout the lower Mid-Atlantic region, to the joy of some, and the horror of others.

The Cube is the most famous and popular magic mushroom. It's easy to grow, and is widely cultivated indoors everywhere, secretly, of course. Often, home growers will toss out nearly worn-out magic mushroom gardens. These throw-aways sometimes continue to sprout more mushrooms. In Pennsylvania, I have seen Cubes growing in landscaping mulch on a college campus, and in backyard compost patches. Home growers are almost certainly responsible for the Cube appearing in this region. But you never know what surprise a wild mushroom explorer will find tomorrow.

Across the Internet, you will find spores of various strains of *P. cubensis* for sale. Some of these have exotic names, such as "Golden Teacher", "Menace", and "Blue Meanie". Others are named for their place of origin. Examples of these are "Mazatapec", "Puerto Rican", "Hawaiian", etc. Certain states have banned the purchase of spores of any psychedelic mushroom species, Other states, including Pennsylvania, permit buying and possessing them, because the spores

do not contain illegal substances. But growing magic mushrooms from spores is currently illegal everywhere in the US.

This is a moderately potent psychedelic species, and overdoses by uninformed risk-takers are common. Consuming only about ¼ oz. (about 7 grams) of the fresh mushroom produces noticeable psychedelic effects. About 1½ oz. (about 40 grams) causes a stronger experience. When dried, the mushroom is about 10 times more potent, by weight.

Many magic mushroom connoisseurs do not prefer this species. Compared to other such fungi, they feel it offers somewhat "rougher" or "harsher" physical experiences. Still, other navigators are quite happy with their Cube's cosmic flights, probably because it's the species they cut their teeth on, long ago. They learned to deal with some physical discomforts, such as vomiting and nervous agitation, as just part of the psychedelic experience.

Don't doubt the authorities' dedication to enforce the laws against magic mushroom possession. In an extreme case, shortly after magic mushrooms became illegal, over 50 years ago, a police officer in a Southern state shot and killed a teenager who was gathering Cubes in a pasture when he ran off with his pickings.

**BASICS: MANURE-GROWING, LARGE, WHITE OR YELLOWISH-CAPPED MUSHROOM WITH GRAY TO BLACK GILLS. PURPLE-BLACK SPORES, AND A RING ON THE STEM. THE ENTIRE MUSHROOM BRUISES BLUE WHEN HANDLED.**

**CAP:** ½" to 3½" across. White, often brownish toward the center. Bruises blue. At first dome shaped, then becoming flat, often with a raised bump in the center. Sticky.

**GILLS:** Gray at first, then becoming gray-violet and finally black, with white edges. Attached to the stem.

**SPORE PRINT:** purple-brown. **SIZE:** 11.5-17 x 8-11.5 µ

**STEM:** 1¼" to 6" long, ⅛" to ⅝" or more thick. White. With a ring. Bruises blue.

**GROWTH:** On manure in pastures and fields in warm climates. June to October in our region, but rare.

**EDIBILITY:** Not dangerously poisonous in the ordinary sense except, perhaps, to small children. But can be nauseating to the point of vomiting. Produces strong psychedelic effects lasting up to 8 hours. Do not eat; do not gather!

**LOOKALIKES:** Edible Meadow Mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) grows in similar places. Its gills are unattached to the stem, and it makes a chocolate-brown spore print. Poisonous, Green-Spored Lepiota (*Chlorophyllum molybdites*) makes a green spore print. Neither species are psychedelic. Edible, horse manure-growing, Solid-Stemmed Panaeolus (*Panaeolus solidipes*) makes a jet-black spore print. It, too, is not psychedelic. Look-alike, psychedelic *Psilocybe ovoideocystidiata* grows in the spring in this region on woody debris.

“The psychedelic experience is simply a compressed instance of what we call understanding.”  
(Terrance McKenna)

# Ovoid

*Psilocybe ovoideocystidiata*

(sigh-LAW-sib-ee owe-void-ee-owe-sis-tee-die-A-ta)



This recently discovered local fungus is a game changer for magic mushroom cosmonauts. It challenges the west coast’s reputation of having the best of the country’s psychedelic mushroom species. Underground connoisseurs of fine-flying fungi say the Ovoid can stand up to some of the best of the west. They know that it’s a felony to possess or consume this or any magic mushroom. Nevertheless, they report noticeable effects from drinking a tea made by boiling for half an hour about 0.6 grams dried, or about 5 grams of fresh Ovoid mushroom.

This species was discovered in 2003 in Montgomery County in Pennsylvania. Since then, it’s been found across the Middle Atlantic States, and beyond. It appears in the spring, mainly in April in Black Morel season, and into Yellow Morel time through May. Most commonly, it grows in woody debris along streams, but sometimes it shows up in backyard wood chip mulch patches.

Many psychedelic mushroom species will stain blue when bruised, but the Ovoid often peculiarly shows both blue and green tints when bruised by pinching. This color test is important for low-information magic mushroom hunters, because of the danger of confusion with the extremely poisonous Deadly Galerina (*Galerina marginata*). The Galerina does not stain blue or green when bruised. But, do not use the color effect as the sole feature to distinguish the Galerina. Learn all this dangerous character’s features, so you can easily recognize it. Then teach it to all your friends.

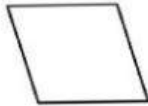
**BASICS:** DARK BROWN TO YELLOWISH-BROWN TO CREAMY CAP, OFTEN WITH BLUISH ZONES. WITH A LOW CENTRAL KNOB, AND A WAVY EDGE. STAINS BLUE AND GREEN WITHIN 30 SECONDS WHEN BRUISED. GROWS IN CLUSTERS ON WOODCHIPS, AND EXPOSED AND BURIED WOOD DEBRIS ALONG RIVER AND STREAM BANKS.

**CAP:** 3/8" to 1 3/4" across. Wavy edge. Often with a low knob in the center. Chestnut-brown to yellowish-brown to creamy color, depending upon moisture. Often with bluish tones. Stains blue when handled.

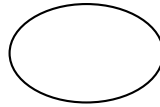
**GILLS:** Attached to the stem. Range from whitish to dark purple-brown with age.

**SPORE PRINT:** Dark purple-brown. Distinctly rhomboidal-shaped under a high power microscope. **SIZE:** 7-12 x 5.5 -8.5  $\mu$  Rhomboid-shaped in face view, ellipsoid in side view.

This is a rhomboid shape



This is an ellipsoid shape



**STEM:** 3/8" to 3/2" thick. Whitish, with irregular yellowish, brownish, or bluish tones. Hollow. Usually with a very vague, but sometimes distinct, ring. Smooth, with small scales near the bottom. Bruises blue and green.

**GROWTH:** In loose or dense clusters, in woodchip mulch, and along river and stream flood zones, in exposed and buried woody debris. April to June; peak with Black Morels.

**LOOKALIKES:** *Agrocybe* species make rusty-brown to dark brown, not dark purple-brown, spore prints. The very poisonous Deadly Galerina (*Glaseria marginata*) makes a rusty-brown spore print. Although it's mainly fall-growing, it can sometimes appear in the spring during Ovoid's season. None of these cypocats species bruise blue.



Underside view of Ovoid mushroom