

THE MUSHROOM QUEEN



Linh DePledge/For The Daily Astorian
Veronica Williams is known for her mushroom skills.

Fun gal looking for fungi

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

If any person alive has earned her nicknames, it is 84-year-old Veronica Williams, a saucy, sharp-witted plum cake of a woman known throughout the region as “The Mushroom Lady,” “The Mushroom Guru” and “The Mushroom Queen.”

Williams, who wears a ruby-studded gold pendant shaped like the poisonous amanita mushroom, is widely considered the foremost expert on fungi.

On most mornings, she takes to the woods near her home 10 miles south of South Bend, Washington, or to remote forested areas along the highway.

There, basket in hand, Swiss Army Knife deployed, she forages for wild edibles:

herbs, berries, nettles, fiddleheads, watercress ... and mushrooms, the object of a lifelong romance that has spanned the globe.

“All I can say is, I fell in love with mushrooms when I was 3, and I’m still in love with mushrooms,” said Williams, a native of Hungary, where she grew up in the Carpathian Mountains. “It’s something I do with a passion.”

See WILLIAMS, Page 3C

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