

Continued from Pg. 10

"I wanted to do some off-season programs, and I thought mushrooms would be a good topic," Osis says. "They've all been super popular."

Besides the mushroom programs and hikes at state parks up and down the coast, Osis has taught seminars at the Tillamook County Library and the Tillamook Forest Center. He's also held identification courses at Clatsop Community College focused on mushrooms, which included field trips and a test kitchen.

Over the years, Osis has discovered that when it comes to collecting mushrooms, there are few better places to be than the Oregon Coast. "This is really the perfect area for finding good mushrooms," he said. "Our coastal forests are ideal for mushroom growing, probably the best in the world. The change of seasons from rain in the early spring to dry in the summer really promote great growth in the fall."

Osis also notes that the seasonal changes make the entire coast good pickings. "Depending on rainfall, the North Coast generally has the best collecting mid-August through November," he says, adding that October is generally the best overall month.

That being said, Osis has noticed that this growing season has been vastly different than last October. "We've really had an above-average season so far because of the rain during the summer. Last year was really dry, and some of the mushrooms didn't produce as well as normal," he says, citing chanterells in particular.

Now, mushroom enthusiasts can take heart in the fact that there are plenty to be found.

Education is vital in mushroom foraging, and Osis says there is no better way to master identification than by seeing them in person.

Some mushrooms are safe and delicious to eat, but others are poisonous. Not knowing the difference can be dangerous. "My biggest tip would be to invest in a quality field guide and study it," Osis says, recommending "All That The Rain Promises And More" by David Arora.

Lacking that, Osis suggests signing up for a class or field trip.



Fort Stevens Park Ranger Dane Osis helps identify mushrooms on a Wild Mushroom Hike in September in the park.



Wild Mushroom Hike attendees look at mushrooms before they start their hike with park rangers at Fort Stevens State Park.

"Many of the community colleges and state parks are great sources for classes and knowledgeable people," he says. "Even if you come away empty handed, it's a great learning experience and social event."

Osis is also quick to point out that education includes being aware of the rules and regulations of the land you choose in which to forage. "You should definitely study up on the area you are collecting in," he says. While many parks allow collecting these days, national forests often require a permit, and collecting in campgrounds can be limited.



Fort Stevens State Park Ranger Dane Osis, left, identifies an Amanita mushroom during a hike at the park.

Like any good teacher, Osis is hard-pressed to pick a favorite out of his subjects. Still, it's often hard to



Tyrone Mortensen takes a photograph of a wild mushroom while hiking with others on a Wild Mushroom Hike in late September at Fort Stevens State Park.



Park Ranger Dane Osis helps hikers identify a wild mushroom on Sept. 30 at Fort Stevens State Park.

resist pointing out some of his favorite varieties of mushroom. "There are so many it is hard to choose," he said. "I really like king boletes, my favorite mushroom to pick."

UPCOMING MUSHROOM PROGRAMS

Fort Stevens State Park
www.oregonstateparks.org

Email Dane Osis at
dane.osis@state.or.us

Wild Mushroom Hike:
1 p.m. Oct. 21

Wild Mushroom Hike:
1 p.m. Nov. 11

Mysterious Mushrooms:
1 p.m. Nov. 12

Wild Mushroom Hike:
1 p.m. Nov. 23

Mysterious Mushrooms:
1 p.m. Nov. 26

Wild Mushroom Hike:
1 p.m. Nov. 30

Often the thrill of the hunt yields some strange and exciting specimens. "Cauliflower mushrooms are an unusual mushroom that can grow to immense sizes," Osis says. "I have found them weighing over 20 pounds. They're fun to find and really good to eat."

When mushroom season hits, neither rain nor mud nor foggy morn can keep Osis from his appointed rounds scanning the forest floor for delicious treasure. "I forage for mushrooms because it's fun, and they're good to eat," he says. "It's an ideal activity for anyone. All you really need is a basket and you're set."