

# A Bumper Fungus Crop for Area

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When shadows claim the Sugar Pine trail far up in the Elk Creek country and the ground erupts with fungi, it is easy to believe that leprechauns come out and dance in fairy rings of mushrooms.

On slopes of Diamond Lake, too, where rushes could be hiding places for the "little people," there seems good reason for the fairy rings.

Giant toadstools offer wanted shelter for insects as they prepare for one last meal along the Union Creek trail before winter ice makes stickers of fern fronds and destroys the fungus parasols.

But what purpose does a fairy ring serve on a lawn in the city of Medford where no flight of the imagination can conjure up a troop of the wee folk who inhabit the rushy glen, some gardeners ask.

### Warning Issued About Mushrooms

Departing from fantasy to fact, mushroom fanciers answer: "They are for eating." And here is where Fred Lawrence, 1422 Euclid Ave., Medford, recognized mycologist, issues a warning.

"People should not be tempted to pick and eat unless they know what they are picking. All mushrooms that grow in a ring are not 'fairy-ring mushrooms', and some are very poisonous."

The marasmius oreades or fairy-ring mushroom is edible and palatable, too, with a nut-like flavor, but there is now a Japanese import that resembles it closely and it is being found in the Portland area and may be here, Lawrence cautioned. It is very poisonous.

There are 40 to 50 mushrooms that grow in a ring. The ones recently found in the Union Creek picnic area, growing in a ring under the evergreens, are of the clitocybe genus, Lawrence said.

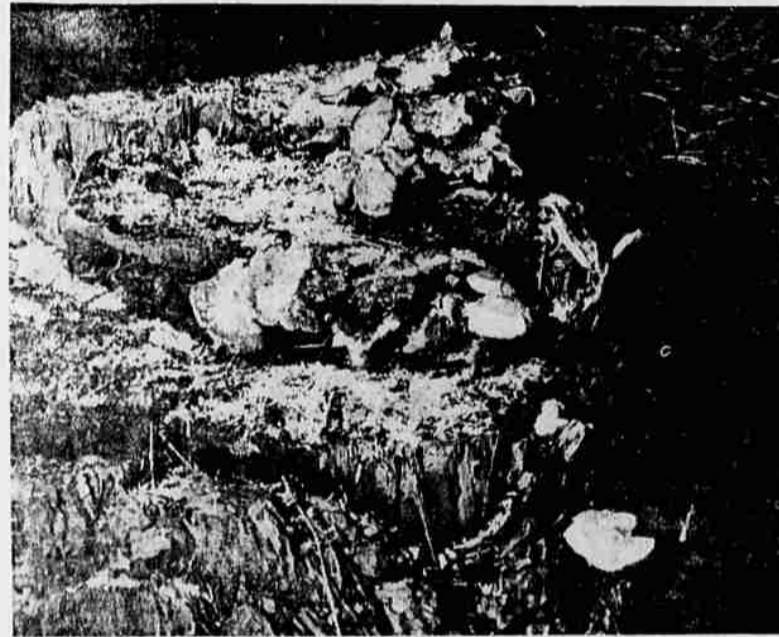
The fungus crop this year in city, country and mountain areas has been one of the largest noted in many years, mycologists point out.

There has been a bumper crop of edible mushrooms, too, but the crop is now past its prime. Many of the mushrooms are water soaked, some are frosted and may soon be decorated with icicles. November was their month! They have been so plentiful along Laurelhurst, Obenchain and Cobleigh roads in the Bulle Falls and McLeod areas that they were visible to passing motorists.

There are 2,000 different species of mushrooms in the



A bed of moss seems a very appropriate place for a mushroom to grow. The encyclopedia gives the French word for moss as probable derivation of the word mushroom.



Mushrooms, edible and non-edible, have through the years preferred the stump in a forest glen or on a mountain peak as a place to grow.



The large mushroom at the top of this photo grows surrounded by the waxy leaves of the twin-flower along the Union Creek trail. It is edible in its prime. Fir needles and frost decorate it now. Its close neighbors, the three in the bottom of the picture, were not identified by Lawrence.

Northwest, Lawrence, whose specialty is the corals, explained. Many are edible, but some are poisonous and those that are poisonous are very poisonous.

Botanists do not separate the toadstools from mushrooms. The less scientific mind, however, classifies the edible varieties as mushrooms and the poisonous ones as toadstools.

### Explode From Ground

In colors that rival the spectrum — red, orange, violet and gold, shading into chartreuse — the mushrooms exploded from the ground this autumn in practically all mountain reaches. The brightest ones appeared in the shadiest places. Great clusters of coral were found, too. Screened by the flaming vine maple, these growths, resembling oceanic life, offered line and color to tempt the artist.

Similar to brown velvet some mushrooms appeared with gills of yellow or chartreuse. The orange ones, emerging from a bed of moss, offered the most striking contrast and an obvious expression of nature's determination to bring from the soil one more eruption of color before snow carpets the earth.

If there is not a heavy freeze this mushroom growth may continue, Lawrence volunteered. Some years, he explained, he has gathered mushrooms throughout the winter in the mountain areas.

To make these the delectable thing gourmets write about, the proper cooking must be done, Lawrence said, adding that this is a study in itself.

### Addresses Portland Society

Lawrence, who recently addressed the Portland Mycology Society on the corals, has obtained much of his knowledge and training in mycology from Dr. Alexander H. Smith, professor of mycology at the University of Michigan. But not his information on the corals. For this, his source is E. J. H. Corner, lecturer at Cambridge University in England, a recognized world authority on corals.

There are between 75 and 100 species of corals found in Oregon, alone, according to Lawrence, a recognized authority but one who modestly insists upon limiting his area to Oregon.

The corals have their host trees. One kind grows under a fir, another kind under a laurel. They are not supposed to grow under pines, but Lawrence says he has found them there. He has been collecting for eight years. Corals have many irregularities, he has found. They appear in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are influenced by altitude as well as their hosts.

Most of them are edible, the Oregon expert said. He has found only two that are not. One is jelly-like in consistency and the other has bright yellow tips and salmon-colored branches. He doesn't think these are poisonous, but they are so bitter after cooking they are not considered edible.

### Discovers New Species

In the Jacksonville area, Lawrence has discovered a new species of mushroom of the genus hygrophorus. It has been named "Species Lawrencei" in the monograph recently published. Dr. Smith declared it a previously unknown species.

In his collection Lawrence has a copy of Dr. Smith's book, "Mushrooms in Their Natural Habitat." It is now out of print and recently sold on the New York market with a book of reprints for in excess of \$170, Lawrence said.

Dr. Smith has collected specimens in this area. Five years ago he set up his laboratory in Grants Pass and Lawrence worked with him there and in the field. He furnished Lawrence with the keys he uses in identification.

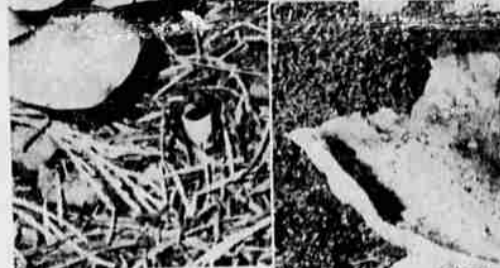
There are 100,000 species in the fungus order, which includes the woody types and the molds (the one from which penicillin is made) as well as those commonly known as toadstools and mushrooms, Lawrence said.

### Ways of Measuring

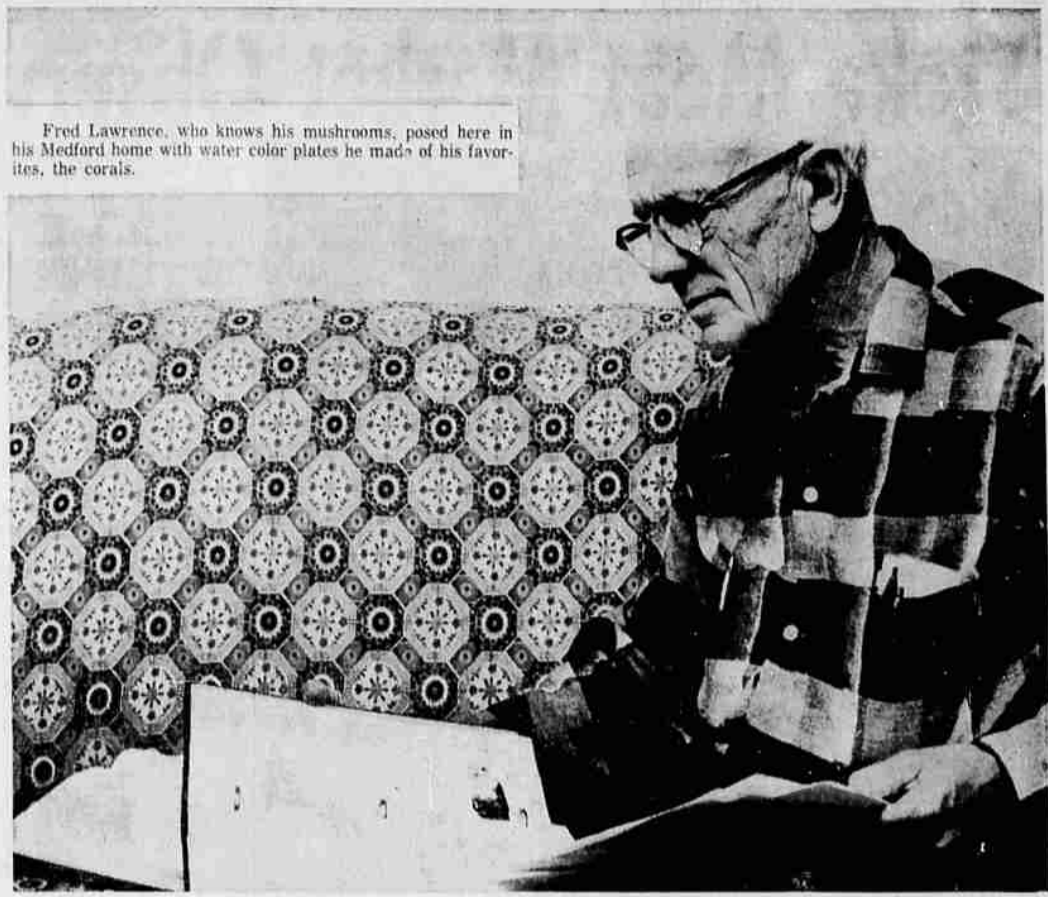
There are different ways of measuring the mushroom or fungus growths. To some people they spell only trouble. They detract from the smooth expanse of green lawn and appear in connection with turf fungus diseases, pink patch and dollar spot. They are a dangerous food, a temptation to the inexperienced. To others, they are a welcome accent to choice foods and an enchanting decoration of the fall and winter earth.

The unusual prevalence of them this year is the result of just the right weather conditions, Lawrence noted.

So, whether they are found in a decomposed stump above the 5,500-foot elevation or in a "Golden Meadow," such as Johnny Gruelle created for "Raggedy Ann," the way of a mushroom and the way of a toadstool are determined by the kind of glasses (rose-colored or clear) worn by the folk who appraise them.



The formation above, found protruding from a rock foundation, was more spectacular than beautiful. It was described by an onlooker as "Ubangi Lips."



Fred Lawrence, who knows his mushrooms, posed here in his Medford home with water color plates he made of his favorites, the corals.

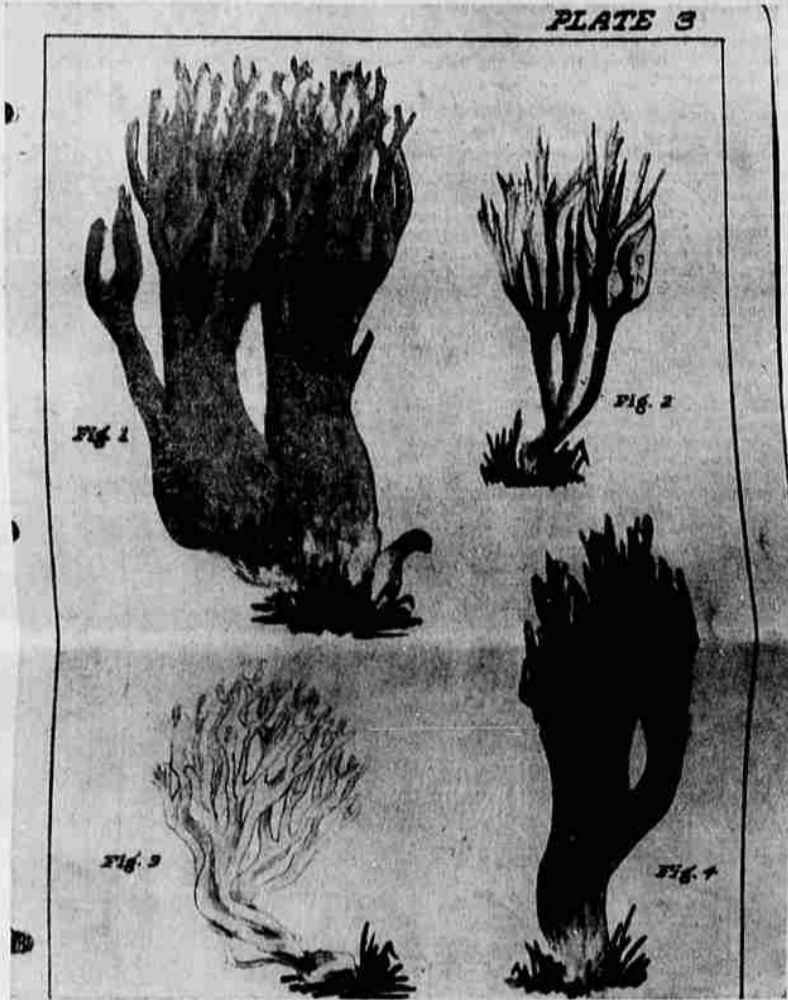


Figure 1, Plate 3, shows what Fred Lawrence considers Oregon's most beautiful coral. It is pale salmon pink in color. There are between 75 and 100 species of coral found in Oregon.

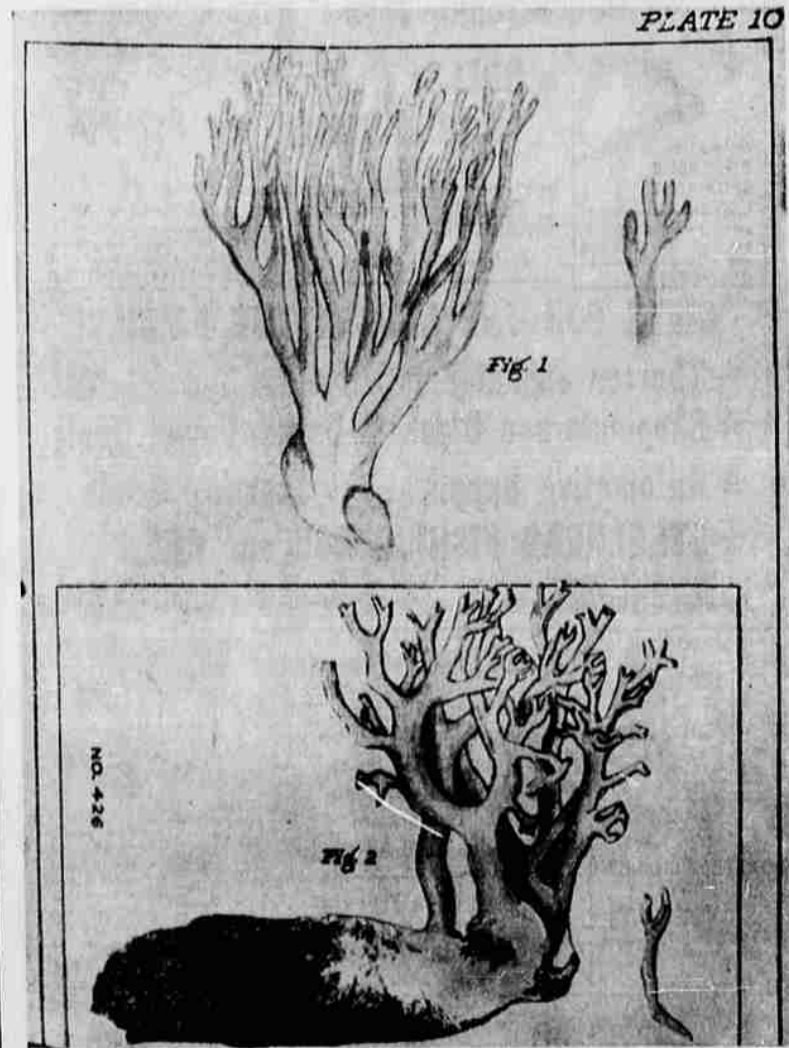


Figure 1, Plate 10, is a coral found for the first time in Oregon by Lawrence. It wasn't included in the record. Figure 2 shows how massive the stems of the coral can be. These drawings, which are in color, were done by Lawrence, who is an artist and a sign painter.

The attractive growth shown below was near a large stone in the vicinity of Becky's Cafe and could be classified as nature's entry for the garden show. It was left undisturbed so the mushrooms (or toadstools) were not classified. They, too, had been given a white frosting.