



## A New Mycological Companion

By Paul Sadowski

In April I received an email from Britt Bunyard, who may be familiar to readers of *The Mycophile* and *McIlvanea*, announcing the launching of a new journal: *FUNGI*.

His editorial group includes many authors who have appeared in those NAMA publications that he has edited for the last few years.

He promises a publication that would fill the void in the periodical literature by presenting articles of both a cultural and technical mycological vantage point.

One will find, for example, Mr. Bunyard's familiar "Editor's Picks," a digest of articles from the technical journals as well as items reported in the general press.

Also appearing in the maiden issue is editorial board member and *McIlvanea* regular, Else Vellinga with her "Mycological Florigellum." This installment presents and summarizes articles dealing with the new phylogeny springing from DNA analysis.

Other authors contribute regularly to fill the cultural part of the magazine's editorial mission: David Work, known to readers of this newsletter, writes a column on mycophagy, "The Wild Epicure," that explores the culinary delights of the morel. With beautiful photography and precise explanation, Work takes the reader through his interest in wild foods and their use in delicious spring quiches. The recipes include step-by-step instructions as well as general culinary technique.

A similar approach is evident in John Plishke III's tutorial on lighting mushroom photos with light-diffusing umbrellas. The pictures show both the results and the technical setups for obtaining the various lighting effects. The thorough documentation will improve any amateur's photography. Fortunately, the table of contents lists the author's name, since it appears nowhere in or near the article. Having worked with John on the collection tables at NEMF forays, I know him to be self-effacing, which may explain the omission.

Michael Wood, the man behind *Mycoweb*, the West Coast mushroom website, promises to review and present the website literature.

Another interesting article on mycological literature of a distinctly different sort comes courtesy of David Rose, of the New York Botanical Garden and the New York State Museum. He discusses the conflation of mycophobia, anti-semitism and hate literature. In his thoroughgoing essay, Rose sheds light on these dark corners of literature and mycology from the 1500s through contemporary times. The article is at least as thoughtfully written as it is disturbing.

NYMS member Elinoar Shavit, who has graced the pages of this newsletter with her intelligence, brings her expertise to *FUNGI* with a piece tracing the development of irifolven, a tumor-reducing compound derived from *Omphalotus illudens*—the Jack o' Lantern. She documents the progress of this pharmaceutical from its beginnings at the NYBG through its clinical trials in this decade. Her article shows the hopes and the pitfalls involved in bringing this potential life-saver to the medical arsenal.

There is an article on fungal bioremediation by Ron Spinoza and a review of Andrus Voitk's little book of Canadian Maritime mushrooms as well as recap of 2007 forays in that region.

But no article better illustrates Bunyard's ambition than the primer, a syllabus really, "Myxomycete Plasmodia and Fruiting Bodies: Unusual Occurrences and User-friendly Study Techniques." And just in time for slime-mold season!!

Okay, so slime molds aren't the best sauté pan fillers. But this article fills half of this volume's pages, is beautifully illustrated with drawings where most effective, and photographs, with similar result. Though technical, the prose does not require constant reference to a mycological dictionary yet clearly explains these strange and rather ubiquitous summertime creatures. Before its appearance in *FUNGI* the authors brought this material to seventh grade science classes and college underclassmen. For those who like creepycrawlies, this article is filled with activities that will make it a perennial reference.

Bunyard and his group of colleagues have hit a home run in their first at-bat. I do wonder how far some of the columns can go. After Plishke has turned us into Ansel Adams and Work has made us into chefs, then what?

What we do know is that the field of mycology is in constant flux. Having an interpretive guide to help us amateurs understand these changes will be invaluable. It will be interesting to see *FUNGI* evolve with the field over the coming years.

Many of the articles of the first volume are available as free downloads on the *FUNGI* website. Go to: [www.fungimag.com](http://www.fungimag.com). 