



Unusual Sightings

Agaricus deserticola

G. Moreno, Esqueda & Lizárraga

The landscape appears lunar, and yet there are mushrooms here, somehow. Hugh Smith, no stranger to sighting unusual mushrooms, shared this lucky find. Contributing Editor, Michael Wood (mykoweb.com) reveals what's known about this enigmatic mushroom. *Agaricus deserticola* is a mushroom of dry, open habitats, believed to have evolved from a moisture-loving *Agaricus* ancestor. Its *Agaricus* features are still apparent though modified, presumably to aid survival in an arid environment. These include a cap that no longer expands, blackish-brown, crumpled, gills that don't forcibly discharge spores, and a partial veil that remains intact even at maturity. This type of development is called secotioid or sequestrate, with examples known from a number of genera of gilled mushrooms and boletes. Two such fungi that resemble *Agaricus deserticola* are *Podaxis pistillaris* and *Montagnea*

arenaria. Both are found primarily in the desert regions of California. *Podaxis pistillaris* has an elongated, scaly cap, much like a shaggy mane, *Coprinus comatus*, but is not deliquescent and despite the physical similarities, probably is not closely related. *Montagnea arenaria* is a stalked puffball distantly allied to *Coprinus*. It has a woody stipe which emanates from a volva cup, and is crowned by thin umbrella of crumpled, blackish gill-like tissue. *Agaricus deserticola* is solitary to gregarious on disturbed ground, dry waste areas, e.g., roadsides, edges of agricultural fields, etc. It is uncommon in the San Francisco Bay Area, occasional in the Central Valley; fruiting in the spring. Synonyms for this species are *Secotium texensis* Berkeley & Curtis; *Longula texensis* (Berkeley & Curtis) Zeller; *Longia texensis* (Berkeley & Curtis) Zeller; *Agaricus texensis* (Berkeley & Curtis) Geml, Geiser & Royse. 🍄

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