

Mushrooms in the Garden

By Deborah Birge, Fort Bend Master Gardener

Q: What do I do with those mushrooms and other fungi in my garden?

Recommended solution: A common question for the hotline is about Toadstools and Mushrooms. Mushrooms may look strange, but they are beneficial to your beds. Their size, shape and life span vary quite a bit depending on the type. Nothing needs to be done to get rid of them unless you don't like the look. They are easily removed by lifting them out of the bed and moving the mulch around to allow the area to dry out.

Slime Mold, *Fuligo* is another garden beneficial although it is quite unsightly. This common slime mold has the unfortunate name of “Dog Vomit Slime” and comes in many colors – pink, orange, yellow or white being the most common.



Mushroom

Prevention and avoidance are the major strategies for control of these fungi since chemicals are ineffective. This involves removing or disturbing the wood chips or bark mulch with a rake to disperse the fungus and to dislodge the fruiting bodies. This also helps to dry out the mulch by increasing air circulation and creating conditions which are less favorable for the growth of the fungus. Some success has been achieved by periodic overlaying with fresh mulch, thereby reducing the light, but it is important to avoid making the mulch layer too thick. It is also important to select mulches that contain at least 85% bark. Avoid mulches that contain a high proportion of wood since wood chips are better sources of carbon, an important food source for the fungus, than mulches that mainly contain bark. All types of wood mulches can potentially support the growth of fungus and research is currently in progress to determine if one type of mulch is more frequently associated with certain fungus than another. Another tactic to minimize fungi in the landscape is to use an alternative form of mulch such as black plastic, stone, pea gravel, or marble chips in areas directly adjacent to homes, cars, or other surfaces where the risk of damage is the greatest.



Slime Mold

Resources

For information on fungus in the landscape visit:

- <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-growing-in-my-landscape-mulch-mushrooms-slime-molds-and-fungus>
- <https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/factsheets/slime-mold/>
- <http://www.mushroomexpert.com/yard.html>

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