

Spawning

Scatter the spawn over the surface and mix in until it is about 2 to 3 ins deep Firm the surface again and cover with a damp newspaper to keep the compost dark and moist. The compost will become covered in white fungal threads in two to three weeks.

Casing

When the compost is fully colonised (covered with white threads) remove the newspaper. Cover the compost with 2.5 cm (1 inch) of casing.

Casing may be either:

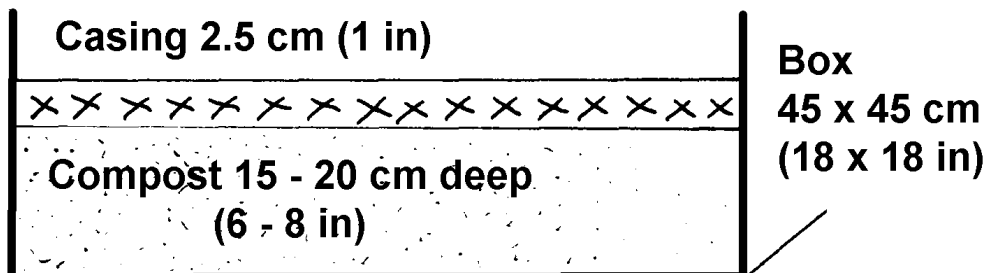
50% garden soil 50% peat plus 2 or 3 handfuls of lime per bucketful of casing

OR 50% chalk and 50% peat.

Peat free compost can also be used but add the chalk or lime as above.

Before using the casing it should be thoroughly wetted and allowed to drain. Keep the casing layer evenly moist but not wet. Use a fine rose watering can or mist spray. Mushrooms will first appear as tiny pin points 3-5 weeks after casing. Air humidity must be kept high at this point (about 85%) to allow mushrooms to develop. They will grow in a flush approximately every 10 days. Pick by twisting the cap until the mushroom comes away, avoid damaging the small ones nearby. Remove damaged and broken stems. Fill the holes with casing.

Enjoy your mushrooms



Cultivated White Cap Mushrooms (*A. hortensis* & *A. campestris*)

Especially in warm dry years *Agaricus campestris's* white cap shines out through the grass after heavy rain. It can appear in groups but also as fairy rings. Noted for its white cap and pink gills which turn dark brown to black with age. The cap is domed, 3-10 cm across with a 5-8 cm long stalk. Smells pleasantly spicy and tastes mildly nutty.

The Cultivated cousin (*Agaricus hortensis*) has been selected from the wild strain and adapted through the years to maximise yields in a farm situation however it is still at home in the wild and if grown traditionally is packed with flavour.



How to Grow

These mushrooms can be grown outdoors or in controlled conditions indoors.

Safety

CAUTION You must positively identify any mushroom you pick. Mushrooms other than those we have planted may also grow. Allergic reactions: Some people can have allergic reactions to mushrooms and spores released from mushrooms.

Growing Outdoors

Choose a lawn or pasture where the soil is rich, moist and contains plenty of fully decayed organic matter. In the garden it will thrive best in lawns which are not too acidic and therefore do not grow moss. Neglected lawns and around compost heaps are good sites.

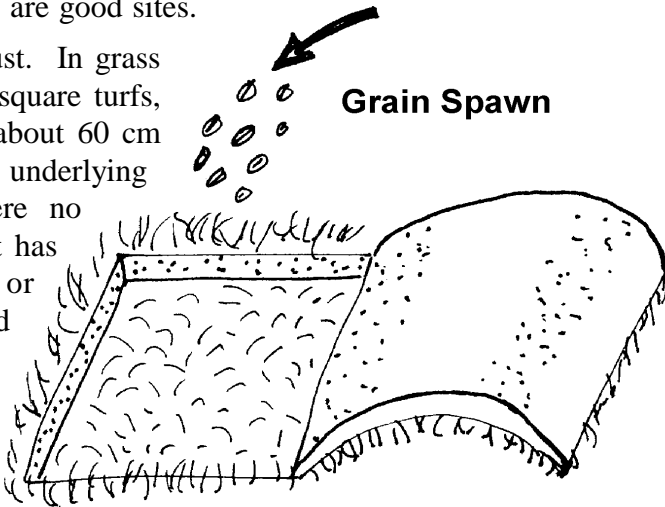
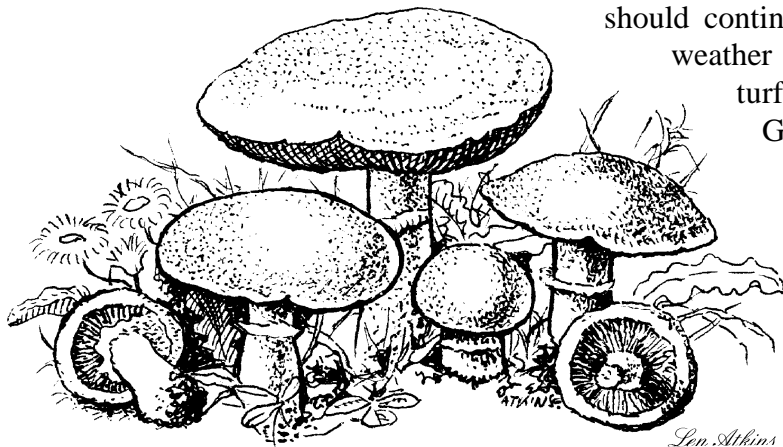
Sow from Spring to August. In grass areas lift 25 cm (10 ins) square turfs, 4 cm (1.5 ins) deep and about 60 cm (24 ins) apart. Loosen the underlying soil with a fork. Where no animal or garden compost has been added recently, or where the soil is poor add well rotted farm manure, garden or mushroom compost (see below). Spread the mushroom spawn thinly over the soil and mix to a depth of 1 cm. Press the turf down firmly and moisten in dry weather. The soil below should not get saturated. A good dressing of humus - limed peat, rotten horse manure or old mushroom compost is recommended.

Growth will depend on the weather. Mushrooms grow best in warm damp

conditions and once established they should continue to thrive if the weather is warm and the turf is kept moist.

Growth produces patches of greener grass.

Mushrooms will not grow in any place which has been treated with chemical fertilisers.



Growing Indoors

Mushrooms grow best at an even temperature of about 16°C(60°F). They do not grow well below 10°C(60°F) or above 20°C(68°F).

Preparing the Compost

You need 20kg (45lbs) of well rotted compost for 100g spawn. Make the compost from fresh, strawy horse manure, or straw supplemented with organic nitrogen. The best compost for mushrooms is horse manure which is easily obtained from stables. Make your compost heap in an open shed or protected by some kind of covering. A strong polythene sheet will do. Make sure the compost is free of worms, invertebrates etc., which will eat the spawn. The manure will be "clean" if composting temperatures are reached.

Horse Manure

For 20kg I start with 4 good barrow loads of manure. Make sure the straw is well moistened, fork into a heap and pack down firmly. Within hours the temperature in the middle of the heap should rise and become too hot to touch. Turn the heap every 2 days for 2 to 3 weeks by forking the outside cooler manure into the inside and moisten any dry straw each time. Your compost is ready when it has become dark brown and has a sweet smell, it should be just moist enough to be able to squeeze out a few drops of water. Now fork it into a mushroom box or bed, the extra I use on the garden.

Straw and organic nitrogen

Make a similar sized heap as above by thoroughly wetting the straw over several days and stacking using an activator on top of each 15cms. (6 ins.) of straw. Suitable activators can be 2% dried blood or 5% deep litter poultry manure. The heap will get hot and should be turned and forked as above.

Mushroom Beds or Boxes.

A cellar, shed, cool greenhouse, shelter or even garden frame can be used. Beds should be about 25cms.(10 ins.) deep, boxes 15-20cms.(6-8 ins.) deep.

Tightly pack with compost. It may heat up after packing so leave until the temperature is steady and no higher than 21°C (69°F).