

Farming Forest Fungi for Added Income¹

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Introduction

People who have access to small diameter hardwood logs, water and a shaded environment can now produce the Japanese forest mushroom and many other edible fungi. Freshly cut hardwood, of many different species, from timber stand improvement cuts and limb wood from timber harvests can be used for the growing substrate. After inoculation with spawn, the logs are incubated until mature. Once mature the logs can be either force fruited, indoors or out, or allowed to fruit naturally depending upon the type of market being serviced. Fresh mushrooms are sold to restaurants, food stores and/or wholesalers. Dried products can be sold as is or turned into a value-added specialty product. Current market demand is being driven by a new consumer awareness of specialty mushrooms and potential medicinal properties of these mushrooms.

Specialty Mushroom Production for the Backyard or Woodlot

The production of specialty mushrooms can be broken down into five basic procedures: 1) Selection and harvest of the substrate, 2) Inoculation of the substrate, 3) Incubation of the substrate, 4) Mushroom production and 5) marketing of the product. There are numerous mushrooms which can be grown by following this basic outline and by modifying the substrate or the environment depending upon the biological needs of the mushroom being grown. Each step will be thoroughly explored using the Japanese forest mushroom as an example. Techniques of different growers from around the world will be used to illustrate these steps.

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