



# Morel Booster™

Morel Mushroom News From Morel Mania, Inc.

Editor: Tom Nauman

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**The National Morel Mushroom Festival**  
Boyne City, Michigan  
The weekend after Mother's Day  
[morelfest.com](http://morelfest.com)

**MORELAPALOOZA™**  
What is it? Watch for more information in future issues of *Morel Booster™*

## New Bumper Sticker Available!



Let 'em know they better not follow too closely during mushroom season.

It is printed on polypropylene - similar to vinyl, but thinner and stronger with automotive-grade pigments that are heat-fused onto the material, so the image is resistant to weather, carwashes, etc. They are flexible and easy to apply and will last a year or two under normal weather conditions.

10" wide X 3" tall.

Find them in the "New/Miscellaneous" section of our web catalog  
[www.morelmania.com](http://www.morelmania.com)

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## "Baked Potato" Mushrooms?

Doug H. from Morton, Illinois submitted the following question:

*I know it's not morels but I have a mushroom question for you. I have some mushrooms growing in my yard. They look like small puffballs. They are light to golden brown...the best description would be they look like small brown potatoes. They sort of just are right on the top of the soil...no cap or stem, just round. I have gotten them the last couple years but more this year than ever before. I've attached a picture. Can you identify them by the photo or description? I am curious if they are puffballs which I have seen to be edible.*



Hi Doug, interestingly enough, I've seen these before at my favorite golf course about seven years ago. I could not identify them and since I wasn't sure, I left them alone. I didn't take any pictures but remember my sister and I remarked that they looked as if someone had spilled a basket of baked potatoes in the middle of a fairway. I sliced one open and remember that they were black inside. I had forgotten about them until I received your email.

I forwarded you picture to Dr. Darrell Cox. He is my number one resource on anything mushroom. He knows more about mushrooms than I ever will. Here's his reply: *I'm pretty sure they are "earth balls", belonging to the genus Scleroderma, the one in your image is likely Scleroderma polyrhizum (used to be S. geastrum, because when they mature they split open and some thought they looked like a star).*

*They're fond of growing in disturbed soil or lawns, but you can find them anywhere. When mature and split open, they're very leathery. Sometimes all that is left when you find them is the leathery outer shell, all the spores inside having been washed out and blown away, and they look like a hole in the ground. That they are black inside early pretty much indicates they are "false puffballs" or Sclerodermas.*

*I tell people that all Sclerodermas are inedible and/or poisonous, although you may find some old mushroom books that say they can be eaten. Michael Kuo says that he was poisoned by accidentally ingesting some of the spores of a different species of Scleroderma. S. polyrhizum fruited in the yard of one of my neighbors new house for two years before finally petering out. I've never seen them in a fairy ring, but don't doubt it, since they are reported to be mycorrhizal. I've also heard them called poor man's truffles.*

*I sent your fungus image to a couple of Scleroderma experts. Both say it's a Scleroderma, but not the one I thought. They agree it's likely Scleroderma michiganense, but I had the genus right. Probably doesn't amount to a hill of beans unless you're really into Sclerodermas and a stickler for a precise ID.*

*Mainly, remember, it's not a good idea to eat any Scleroderma..... and learn to tell them from puffballs.*

For mor information visit:

[http://www.mushroomexpert.com/scleroderma\\_michiganense.html](http://www.mushroomexpert.com/scleroderma_michiganense.html)

## Not the Usual “Walk in the Woods”



Vicky with the Sulfur Shelf mushroom.

Every year Vicky and I keep an eye on a certain tree that is located along one of our regularly traveled routes. In the area of the tree where a limb broke off years ago, we usually find a Sulfur Shelf (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) mushroom. We first discovered it about fifteen years ago. It has skipped a year or two at times, but returned nicely for 2010.

The harvest is not the usual “walk in the woods” as the tree is located on city property on a busy state highway. No, I’m not going to divulge the GPS coordinates. The mushroom grows about twenty feet off the ground. We used to haul a ladder to get to it, but I’m now old enough to know better than to stand on the top rung of a ladder. The ground at the base of the tree is not level either.

So, this year, we used a pole saw. The kind that extends and has a curved blade with sharp teeth for trimming small limbs. It worked wonderfully and Vicky used the laundry basket to catch the falling mushroom. It was in the skillet within fifteen minutes.

I’m reminded of one of my oldest brother’s sayings, “The Boy Scout motto is not *Be Prepared*. It’s *Improvise!*”

## Autumn Sightings

The “Sightings” page isn’t just for morels, Let us know what you’re finding. Click the “Sightings” link on the web site:

<http://www.morelmania.com>

## A Rose By Any Other Name

### The use of scientific names

You will frequently see the scientific or Latin names used for mushrooms in the *Morel Booster™*. We do this for less confusion as to the exact mushroom we’re describing. Less confusing, you say? Actually, yes.

For instance, a “sponge” mushroom is a common name for morels in the Midwest, someone in the Pacific Northwest might think we are talking about a bolete (*Boletus edulis*). I’ve also heard the term “beefsteak mushroom” used to describe three different mushrooms (*Fistulina hepatica*, *Gyromitra esculenta*, and *Gyromitra caroliniana*). In Kentucky, a morel might be called a “Dry Land Fish”. Elsewhere, I’ve heard them referred to as “Johnny Jump Ups”. These are regional names and usually work well as long as you’re within the region. Away from the region, the speaker might not be understood.

For the mycologists, the latin names are useful when talking to others in a different country. “Morels” (English) are “Morilles” in France and “Merkels” in Germany. *Morchella esculenta* is understood by mycologists in all three countries. There are also several different species of morels. To be specific, the species name is useful.

The scientific binomial system consists of eight categories and specifically describes just about any organism. For example, the Slippery Elm to botanists is *Ulmus rubra* We use the final two categories, Genus and Species. “*Morchella*” is the genus and “*esculenta*” is the species. They are usually in italic type with the first letter of the genus being capitalized and the species in all lower case type.

Another reason we use them is for our readers to do further research. If you search on the net for *Morchella elata* you should find several links of exactly what we are discussing, a black morel. But, we’re back to being confused again. The mycologists don’t agree on a lot of particulars. Some think there are as many as sixty different species of morels while others believe there are only three.

## Readers Write

Hi Tom. This will be my first year to try some fall mushroom hunting. I see there are many varieties to look for. Do you carry a shroom sack (like you would for morels) to put them in? Do they drop spores also? Thanks, Doug.

Thanks for asking, Doug. The answer to both questions is, “Yes”. However, one Shroom Sack™ or Spore Spreader™ may not be big enough though, since Autumn mushrooms can be much bigger and you may find enough to fill several sacks.

Additionally, Autumn mushrooms are solid whereas morels are hollow. You’ll have more weight when the Shroom Sack™ or Spore Spreader™ is full. With the increased weight, the Spore Spreader™ will cause less damage from the “grating”.

I sometimes carry a pop-up laundry basket because they will hold a greater volume of mushrooms while allowing the spores to escape and let’s air circulate around the mushrooms to retard the growth of bacteria.

The problems with them are that they are not very durable. The mesh will tear and the handles will break or become detached. They usually last for only one good outing.