

Ontario Mushroom Identification Chart

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Species	Season	Where It Grows	Key ID Features	Dangerous Look-alike	Edibility
Morel (Morchella spp.)	Late Apr – early Jun	Old apple orchards, dying elms and ash, burn sites, poplar stands	Honeycomb-pitted cap fully attached to the stem; completely hollow from tip to base when sliced	False morel (wrinkled not pitted; chambered inside, never hollow)	Choice; always cook
Golden chanterelle (Cantharellus spp.)	Late Jun – Sep	Mossy mixed forest with oak, birch and hemlock; well-drained slopes	Egg-yolk yellow; false gills (blunt, forking ridges) running down the stem; apricot smell	Jack-o'-lantern (true sharp gills, grows in dense clusters on wood)	Choice
Black trumpet (Craterellus fallax)	Jul – Sep	Mossy hardwood slopes under oak and beech	Grey-black, thin-fleshed trumpet; no true gills; smoky-sweet smell	None serious in Ontario	Choice
Chicken of the woods (Laetiporus sulphureus)	Jun – Oct	Living and dead hardwood trunks, especially oak	Bright orange overlapping shelves, sulphur-yellow pore surface, no gills	None direct, but specimens on conifers or black locust cause reactions; always ID the host tree	Good; cook well, small portion first time
Hen of the woods / maitake (Grifola frondosa)	Sep – Nov	Base of mature oaks	Grey-brown ruffled, spoon-shaped fronds from a single branching base	Black-staining polypore (bruises black); Berkeley's polypore (edible but bland)	Choice
Shaggy mane (Coprinus comatus)	Aug – Oct	Lawns, gravel road edges, disturbed soil	Tall shaggy white cylinder; gills dissolve into black ink with age	Common ink cap (reacts badly with alcohol); pick only young, all-white specimens	Good; cook the day you pick it
Giant puffball (Calvatia gigantea)	Aug – Oct	Meadows, pastures, forest edges	Soccer-ball-sized white sphere; flesh pure white and uniform like marshmallow when sliced	Amanita egg-stage buttons; always slice top to bottom to check for a hidden cap outline	Good; only while pure white inside
Lion's mane / bear's head (Hericium spp.)	Aug – Oct	Wounds on living and dead beech, maple and oak	Cascading white icicle-like spines; no gills or pores	None; nothing dangerous resembles it in Ontario	Choice
Oyster mushroom (Pleurotus spp.)	May – Nov, flushing after rain	Dead and dying hardwoods: aspen, sugar maple, beech	Shelf-like white-to-tan caps, gills running down the short stem, anise-like smell, white-lilac spore print	Angel wings (on conifers; avoid); jack-o'-lantern is orange with a true stem	Good
Lobster mushroom (Hypomyces lactifluorum)	Jul – Sep	Mixed central Ontario forest, sandy soils	Hard orange-red crust over dense white flesh; seafood smell	Deteriorated specimens; pick only firm, bright ones	Good
Honey mushroom (Armillaria spp.)	Sep – Nov	Dense clusters on and around dead or dying trees, stumps, buried roots	White spore print, ring on stem, dark hairs at cap centre	Deadly galerina (rusty-brown spore print); spore print every batch	Edible with caution; always cook well
King bolete / porcini (Boletus edulis group)	Aug – Oct	Under pine, spruce and hemlock; also oak	Brown bun cap; white-then-olive pores instead of gills; fine white netting on the thick stem; flesh does not stain blue	Bitter bolete (pink pores, dark netting); avoid all red-pored or blue-staining boletes	Choice
Pheasant back / dryad's saddle (Cerioporus squamosus)	May – Jun, again in fall	Dead elms and maples, logs	Feather-like brown scales on a cream cap; watermelon-rind smell; pores	None serious; too tough when large	Good when young; tender edges only
Hedgehog mushroom (Hydnum repandum)	Aug – Oct	Mossy conifer and mixed forest	Orange-tan cap with tiny soft teeth underneath instead of gills	None; the teeth make it hard to confuse	Choice
Wine cap (Stropharia rugosoannulata)	May – Oct	Wood-chip beds, mulched gardens and trails	Wine-red cap, grey-purple gills, prominent ring on a white stem	In mulch, avoid anything with a sac at the base or a rusty spore print	Good when young
Chaga (Inonotus obliquus)	Year-round; best late fall – winter	Living yellow and white birch, northern Ontario	Black, cracked, burnt-looking exterior with a rusty-orange interior	Birch burls (wood-hard, no orange interior)	Tea and extract only
Turkey tail (Trametes versicolor)	Year-round	Dead hardwood logs and stumps	Thin, flexible, banded multicolour fans; white pore surface underneath	False turkey tail (smooth brown underside, no pores)	Tea and extract only; too tough to eat
Destroying angel (Amanita bisporigera)	Jul – Oct	Mixed woods and lawns near oaks	All white; true gills, skirt-like ring, sac-like volva at the base (often buried; dig to check)	Mistaken for button mushrooms, meadow mushrooms and puffballs	DEADLY – do not eat
Deadly galerina (Galerina marginata)	Sep – Nov	Clusters on dead wood, same habit as honey mushrooms	Small brown cap with a ring; rusty-brown spore print	Mistaken for honey mushrooms	DEADLY – do not eat
False morel (Gyromitra esculenta)	Apr – May	Sandy soil under conifers, overlapping morel season	Reddish-brown, brain-like wrinkled cap; chambered interior, never hollow	Mistaken for true morels; slice every "morel" lengthwise	DEADLY – do not eat
Jack-o'-lantern (Omphalotus illudens)	Jul – Oct	Dense clusters at the base of hardwood stumps and buried roots	Bright orange with true sharp gills running down the stem	Mistaken for chanterelles	Poisonous – severe illness

Never eat any wild mushroom you have not identified with certainty against multiple features. When in doubt, throw it out.

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