



Alabama Mushroom Society Newsletter

March 2021

Written and Edited by Alisha Millican and Anthoni Goodman

Greetings everyone!

We are excited to be seeing some warm days and are greatly anticipating the Spring fungi flush! We are excited to announce that we are officially beginning our monthly forays! Access to these monthly forays are one of the perks we offer to Alabama Mushroom Society members and will therefore only be open to paid members. Our AMS North-Central foray will be the second Saturday every month in the Cullman County area and is weather dependent. If it is raining, it will be cancelled or potentially rescheduled. The location each month will be sent out to registered members via email the night before. Register at (<https://alabamamushroomsociety.org/events>).

Not a member yet? It's only \$20 a year for your whole household Join up [here](#).. We are hoping to get the details for the AMS South Foray here very soon. It will be held on Lake Martin on the first Saturday of each month. Keep an eye on our [Events page](#) for information on how to sign up.



Suspect Mushroom Poisoning?
Contact US Poison Control at
1-800-222-1222



Trametes lactinea. Photo by Norman Anderson, used with permission.

Mushroom of the Month

Urnula craterium

Early spring is the season of taxonomic order *Pezizales*, these ascomycetes include everything from cup-fungi to morels and even truffles. While morels are on everyone's mind, the mushroom of the month is the far more common *Urnula craterium*. These are the harbingers of spring and a good indication that morels will be up soon. This species is common across North America (especially East of the Rockies) and certainly abundant here in Alabama. It belongs to the family Sarcosomataceae in the order Pezizales of the class Pezizomycetes. The other major member of this family that will be present from March-June is the genus *Galiella* which includes our 'peanut-butter cup' of the woods, *Galiella rufa*.

American botanist Lewis David de Schweinitz first described our mushroom of the month in 1822 based on specimens from North Carolina and placed it in the genus *Peziza*. It was later moved into a new genus, *Urnula* by Elias Fries in

1849. There was some further taxonomic back-and-forth but eventually it was settled into *Urnula* for good (well, at least until genetic barcoding has its say). The name *Urnula* is translated from Latin to mean "little urn" while the species name *craterium* is a specific Latin epithet for a bowl in which wine and water were mixed. So the name *Urnula craterium* is almost literally translated into a little urn of the type in which water and wine are mixed. However, the common name is typically "devil's urn", likely due to its dark flesh.



Urnula craterium begin their fruiting stage as dark (black/brown) fingery growths which often grow in clusters or (in my experience) in a line along the sides of dead and decaying logs/branches. They seem to prefer oak but aren't picky about their hardwoods. If the branch/log is partially buried, it will sap extra water from the ground and provide an ideal fruiting habitat.

These dark fingers (reminiscent of, but much softer than *Xylaria*) will open a star-shaped pore at the apex which widens and deepens to form the urn. The urn will not reach the bottom of the stem and will eventually widen into a circular (or more likely oblong when clustered) cup. The outside of the fruitbody will change from a darker grey to a velvety black while the inside of the cup lightens from black to brown.



Fungi Foragecast

The mushrooms found this month will range substantially depending on your location in the state and recent temperatures and precipitation. March begins the season of the Ascomycetes, all those funny little cups, urns, and funny-shaped morels. There are also a plethora of *Trametes* and various jelly-mushrooms that will make frequent appearance.

You may be surprised to find a stark difference in what you find on slopes compared with flat ground in relation to our terrestrial fungi.

The many dozens of small polypores (especially *Trametes* and *Stereum*) may be making a few more growth spurts but you're really likely to find loads of the gelatinous and sometimes colorful growth around them (the Jellies!) often parasitizing the *Stereum* or crusts such as *Peniophora*. These jellies are discussed in great detail in our blog-post [here](#).

Expect to see the dark fingers of young *Urnula craterium*, followed by many of the larger *Helvella* species including the larger H's *acetabulum*, *solitaria*, *queletii*, or even *lacunosa* or *crispa* (or our Eastern versions). The smaller *Helvellas* seem to follow in April-May. Close relatives, the genus *Peziza*, is home to a wide plethora of cup-fungi ranging from light tans to dark maroons in color. Related genera such as *Disciotis* will also emerge. Of course everyone's favorite, the morels, will also be making an appearance. These can be found as far south as Auburn/Montgomery (though in quite small number). Larger numbers of them can be found further north typically from Birmingham to the top of Bankhead. While Morchella (the morels) don't grow in the massive number seen elsewhere in the country, Alabama will provide enough for a taste or, if

you're lucky, a proper pan-full. Species documented here are typically *Morchella diminutiva* and *americana*. A more comprehensive write-up on Alabama morels can be found [here](#).

There are also a host of *Mycena* and other especially small fungi that thrive in this season, but for those, you may need a hand-lens and to crawl around a bit! Don't forget to post your cool and unusual finds both on our Facebook group and on iNaturalist!





Calendar Contest

February's winner is Kelcie Brown with her photo of Auricularia taken in Talladega County. Don't forget to submit your own photos on the Calendar Contest thread of our Facebook page! Our 2022 calendars with all of this year's winners will be available to order on our website in December. Thank you all for your support of the Alabama Mushroom Society.

In the Kitchen



Plurotus species. Photo by Adam Narmore, used with permission.

We are quickly coming to the end of the usable Oyster season. Pretty soon all of our delicious oysters will be full of tiny larvae that also find them delicious! Use up the last of your usable finds by trying this delicious recipe developed by our very own Becca Mahoney!

Oyster Mushroom Rockefeller

Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 20 minutes Total Time: 40 minutes Yield:
Serves 2-4 as a side dish, 6 as an appetizer 1x

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons butter, divided into 3
1/3 cup unseasoned breadcrumbs
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
3 cloves minced garlic
3 cups fresh spinach leaves, roughly chopped
1/2 cup fresh parsley leaves
salt, to taste
1/2 pound oyster mushrooms, thoroughly cleaned and cut into bite sized portions.

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400F. Once oven is preheated, place oyster mushrooms on a lightly oiled cookie sheet and pop in the oven while you prepare other ingredients. (Check after 10 minutes) Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter and mix it gently with the breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese. Set the mixture aside.

In an ovenproof skillet (8-10 inches), heat 1 tablespoon of the butter with the garlic over medium heat. When the butter melts, cook the garlic for 1 minute, then add the spinach with a sprinkle of salt. Stir the spinach to wilt for 1-2 minutes, then stir in the parsley and remove the mixture to a platter to wait it's turn. Turn the heat off the skillet and add the last tablespoon of butter. Remove mushrooms from the oven.

When the butter melts and coats the bottom of the skillet, add the mushrooms using a slotted spoon in one even layer. Spoon the spinach mixture on top and sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the whole skillet.

Bake at 400F for 10-15 minutes, until the mushrooms are wilted and the breadcrumbs have browned. Serve warm as a side dish or over bread as crostini.

When I made these the second time I baked them in cleaned oyster shells for presentation. Use your cookie sheet with crumpled foil to balance your shells and to catch drips.

MEETING INFORMATION

Our next monthly meeting for AMS members via Zoom is **March 2nd at 7pm**. The Zoom link will be sent out via email. We will be introducing the new Board Members and talk about our plans for this upcoming year. Our president Allen

Carroll will give a presentation on the Fundamentals of Backyard Mushroom Cultivation + Q&A.

Monthly meetings will occur the **first Tuesday of every month at 7pm** via Zoom. We hope to begin hosting in-person meeting options in the near future.



Panus rudis. Photo by Shon Scott, used with permission

2021 Scavenger Hunt

Join in on our year long scavenger hunt and contribute to citizen science at the same time! Find and properly identify as many mushrooms in Alabama as you can from our contest list and win prizes at the end of the year! You get credit for finding the mushrooms when you add them on iNaturalist.

Read the full rules on our website [here](#). Any observations you upload to iNaturalist will be automatically submitted to the project.

Joining the project is easy!

1. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone or access it via the website www.inaturalist.org .
2. Sign up for free to make your account.
3. **Member Scavenger Hunt** Register your iNaturalist user name by joining the scavenger hunt event on our website

Already using iNaturalist? Please consider joining the project FunDis-Fungal Diversity Survey. All your high quality fungi observations will automatically contribute to a database to help scientists and conservationists better understand and protect fungi all across North

America. Our great state of Alabama is know for its biological diversity and it is under-represented in the FunDiS database. Your contributions matter! Check out their project [here](#).

Is there something you would like to see included each month? Do you have foray, photos, a recipe, or something else you would like to contribute? Reach out to us at Almushroomsoc@gmail.com



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