



## Alabama Mushroom Society Newsletter March 2023

Greetings Fungiphiles!!

We are super excited to be seeing evidence that it is going to be a prolific year for fungi! The warm weather and the rain has morels popping up already which is early and very exciting!

Speaking of morels, we have announced the date for our annual Member's Only Morel Foray! We will be holding it Saturday March 11th, in collaboration with Magic City Mushrooms and Feral Foraging. This is a members only event, so go make sure your dues are paid up and then get registered! Reminder that your AMS Membership only covers you and your spouse/SO and minor children in your household. Remember to mark them down as "guests" when you register, as we are again limiting participation to 100 individuals. Spots are filling up fast so reserve your spot today! [Reservation Link](#)

We are excited that Dr. Michael Beug will be presenting for us at our March meeting all about Morels and their look alike in the Southeast! This will be great preparation for the morel season, teaching you everything you need to know to find them yourself! Do not miss this one!

Due to the Morel foray being held the same day we normally hold the Cullman Foray, we will not be holding a Cullman Foray in March. The Baldwin County Foray will be held as normally scheduled. We are excited to begin offering a Jefferson County Foray which will be held the first Saturday of the month! See details under the events page on our website and facebook page. These monthly forays are free for paid members and \$5 per person for non-members.

We are still looking for a possible new location for this year's festival that has facilities but does not have their own fees for camping. If anyone has any suggestions, please send us an email at [almushroomsoc@gmail.com](mailto:almushroomsoc@gmail.com).

Looking forward to the year ahead, we are so excited and hopeful for a prolific year!

-Alisha Millican  
AMS President



**Suspect  
Mushroom  
Poisoning?**  
Call US Poison Control  
at  
**1-800-222-1222**  
**EMERGENCY ID:**  
**Poisons FB Group**

### AMS Board

President  
**Alisha Millican**

Treasurer  
**Spencer Lowry**

Secretary  
**Becca Mahoney**



Morchella sp.  
By Laura Ievio

---

### Upcoming Events

Click [→HERE←](#) for more info or to register for an event!

- March 4th -----Jefferson County Monthly Foray
  - March 7th ----- March AMS Meeting via Zoom
  - CANCELLED ----- Cullman County Monthly Foray
  - March 11th ----- Baldwin County Monthly Foray
  - March 11th ----- Annual Member's Only Morel Foray
  - March 18th-----Elmore County Monthly Foray
- 



Sarcoscypha dudleyi  
by Leitha Lee

# **Mushroom of The Month**

Written by Alisha Millican

## Auricularia and Exidia

This time of year, desperate to start finding some of our spring mushrooms, we are often in the woods and come across the jelly fungi. These are a form group that includes many different genera and even families, but is useful for grouping them together by their texture.

Some of the most common jelly fungi are those in the genera *Auricularia* and *Exidia*, but many people have trouble telling them apart. Let's talk about them individually and then discuss how to tell them apart.

### Auricularia



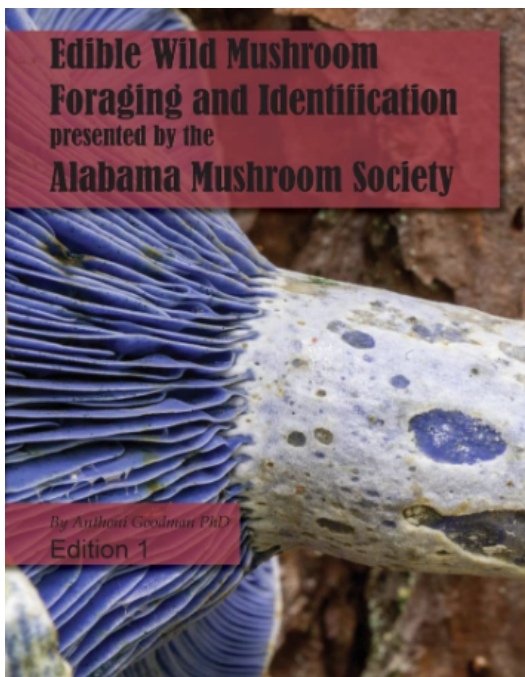
There are five species of *Auricularia* in the southeast that are likely present in Alabama. If it is growing on conifer wood, then it is *Auricularia americana*. The other four species (*angiospermarum*, *mescenterica*, *nigricans*, and +/- *scissa* which has only been documented in southern Florida and may not occur in Alabama) all grow on hardwoods and really need microscopy to distinguish for certain. *Auricularia* likes to grow on larger diameter wood than *Exidia*, usually wrist size and larger, but this is a generalization and not a hard and fast rule. We are going to focus on identification to genus, as all the species are equally edible and species identification is beyond the needs of most of you. *Auricularia*, when dry and not weather worn, will often have a velvety to fuzzy looking top surface. This is not always obvious if the specimens are wet or if they are weather worn.

The underside may have “veins” or undulations, but will not have sharp craters or a netting pattern.

## Exidia



The majority of the Exidia in North America is *Exidia crenata* and it grows on various hardwood branches. *Exidia recisa* is much less common and \*usually\* only grows on Willow branches in North America, although Dr. Greg Thorn has confirmed that it does occasionally grow on other hardwoods. Exidia will not be fuzzy or velvety, tends to grow on narrower diameter branches than *Auricularia* and will have sharp craters. Individual fruiting bodies of Exidia do not get as large as *Auricularia* do.



You can find a complete write up of descriptions of these fungi and many more in our new book *Edible Wild Mushroom Foraging and Identification* presented by the Alabama Mushroom Society and authored by Anthony Goodman, PhD. (The book is available at the link [here](#), but there will be a discount on our certification course if you purchase the course with the book as a bundle instead of seperately. The certification course is not available yet, but we hope to finish it in the next couple of months. Click [here](#) to see it on Amazon. A percentage of proceeds goes to help support our mission to educate and promote the study of mycology.



Exidia on left and Auricularia on right- tops  
Notice the velvety top of the Auricularia



Exidia on left and Auricularia on right- underside  
Notice the sharp craters on the Exidia

When harvesting either of these genera for the table, they should be firm and like the consistency of a gummy bear. They should hold their shape and consistency when you remove them from the branch and not just smash. Both these genera can dehydrate and reconstitute many many times on a branch, degrading and growing bacteria. They should not make your fingers wet or gelatinous when you pick them. These are all signs that they are not in good shape for the table. When removing them from the wood, be sure not to leave any of the bark attached to the mushroom, or it will make cleaning tedious later.



Old Exidia not suitable for consumption. Both of these fall apart and smooch when trying to remove from the branch.

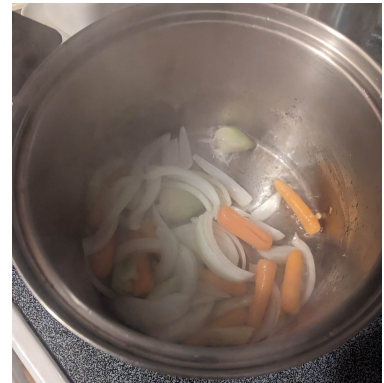


Niether Auricularia nor Exidia have a flavor of their own, but take on the flavor of what you cook them in. They are a tradional additive to many Asian recipes. Both are edible raw and do not need to be cooked thoroughly to be made safe to eat like most fungi, although cooking can potentially kill bacteria or other contaminants. I dont care for the texture and dont normally bother eating these, but found so many today, my desire to utilize the bounty outweighed my preferences, so I thought I would offer you a recipe and inspiration to cook up some fungi that are currently fruiting.

I made my mixed collection of Auricularia and Exidia into my rendition of a Japanese Clear Soup.

I began by removing the fungi from the branches, being careful to not leave any bark behind. I placed them in a collender and gave them a good rinse with hot water.

I seared half a sweet onion, 6 cloves of garlic, smashed, and a handful of carrots in a little bit of sesame oil. I would have added some fresh ginger root if I had it, but substited with some powdered ginger later.



When the veggies were seared, I added two cups of beef broth and four cups of chicken broth. I added in a handful of dried Black Trumpets (*Craterellus fallax*) and a few handfuls of shredded dried Oysters (*Pleurotus* sp) (use what you have on hand!)



Bring this to a boil then lower to a simmer. I let it simmer for 15 mintues until the mushrooms were reconstituted and a consumable texture. Then I dumped in my Auricularia and Exidia, added powdered ginger and salt to taste. Let simmer about ten minutes longer and then serve with green onions on top.



## **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 Ascomyces, all those funny little cups, urns, and funny shaped morels and allies. There are also a plethora of Trametes and various jelly mushrooms that will make frequent appearances. 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. Expect to see the dark fingers of young *Urnula craterium*, followed by many of the larger *Helvella* species including the larger *Helvella* species *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. We are currently collecting interesting members of the family *Pezizales* for a researcher, so be sure to share your finds on facebook so we see them!! Of course everyone's favorite, the morels, will also be making an appearance. These can be found as far south as Barbour County (though in quite small number). Larger numbers of them can be found further north typically from Birmingham and northward. 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. 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](#)!

*Helvella acetabulum* by Steve Fischer



*Tarzetta* sp. By Cassie Pugh

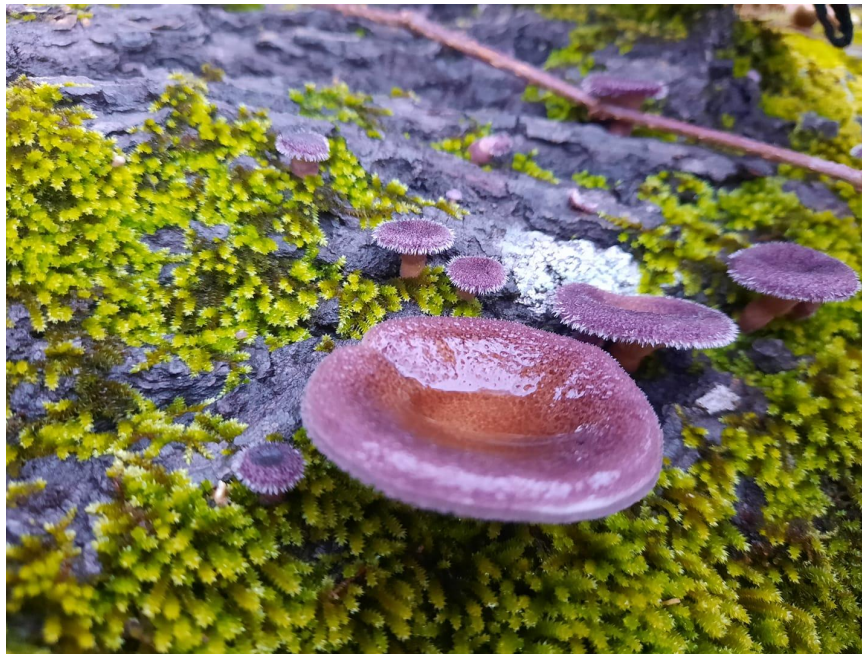


## **Calendar Contest**

Find last year's calendars featuring these photos and all of last year's other amazing winners and other great merch for sale on

→[our Etsy Shop](#)←

Congratulations to our February winner Zachary Horn with his photo of a Panus Lecomtei!



**Go submit your favorite mushroom photos taken this month for February's Calendar contest on Facebook!!**

[Go now!](#)



## **In The Kitchen**

By Kevin Hébert

### **King "Scallops" with Ruby Chard, Stone Grits, Bacon, and Butter Sauce**

King Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus eryngii*) can be cultivated at home or found at a local farmer's market. It has a meaty texture that resembles that of a bivalve. This savory dish pairs the umami quality of the mushroom with earthy greens, creamy grits, crispy bacon, and a buttery sauce.



#### **Ingredients (about 2 servings):**

8-12 oz fresh King Oyster  
(*Pleurotus eryngii*)  
1 bunch ruby or rainbow chard  
1 cup stone ground grits  
4 oz thick cut bacon  
1 ¼ sticks butter  
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce  
3 tbsp Tabasco sauce  
4 oz cream cheese  
4 sprigs fresh thyme  
4 cloves garlic (minced)  
2 cloves of garlic (whole)  
1 large shallot  
1 cup amber beer

2 cups milk  
2 ½ cups water  
½ cup shrimp shells  
1 tbsp dijon mustard  
1 tsp paprika  
2 tsp sugar  
2 tsp red wine vinegar  
6 black peppercorns  
pinch of baking soda  
½ tsp garlic powder  
canola or peanut oil  
salt  
pepper

## **Directions:**

### **Step 1: Prep the ingredients, Start the sauce**

Mince the shallots and garlic. Set a medium sauce pot to mid low heat and add 1 tablespoon of butter. When the butter starts to melt, add half the minced shallots, half the minced garlic, and shrimp shells. Stir occasionally for about 3 minutes, then add the beer, worcestershire, tabasco, creole mustard, paprika, peppercorns, and ½ cup water. Simmer on low until reduced by two thirds. While the sauce is simmering, gently clean the mushrooms with a brush or damp towel and slice the big stems into one inch rounds. Gently score the cut sides in a crosshatch pattern. (My attempt here is to make them look like seared scallops, so you can skip this step if you want, and just slice the whole mushrooms down the middle). Remove the stems from the chard and thinly slice crosswise. Slice the leaves into one inch ribbons. Slice the bacon into quarter inch pieces. Sit the cream cheese and butter out to soften.

### **Step 2: Start the grits**

In a medium pot, bring milk, 2 cups water, baking soda, and garlic powder to a boil. Season with salt. Once boiling, gradually whisk in the grits to avoid clumping. Reduce heat to simmer and continue to cook, stirring frequently, for about 20-25 minutes. Add water or milk as needed to keep the grits moist.

### **Step 3: Cook the other ingredients**

Add the sliced bacon to a large saute pan on medium high heat and cook, stirring frequently until crispy. Remove the bacon from the pan, place on a towel to drain, and reserve the rendered fat. To the hot pan, add the remaining garlic and shallot with the sliced chard stems. Cook, stirring frequently for about 5 minutes or until the chard stems have softened slightly. Add the chard leaves, sugar, vinegar, and 2 tbsp of water. Stir to combine then stir occasionally until the chard has wilted, but still has some texture (a few minutes). Place the chard on a plate and cover to keep warm. Wipe out the pan and add a thin layer of oil. Salt the mushrooms and add them to the pan, cut side down. Cook on one side until golden and crispy, then flip and cook the other side until slightly golden. Remove mushrooms from the pan and place on a rack.

### **Step 4: Finish the dish**

Check your sauce and grits. When the sauce is reduced, turn off the heat and add the remaining butter to the pot. Stir until smooth, season with salt and pepper to taste, then cover and set aside. When the grits have softened, turn off the heat and stir in 2 tbsp of butter and the cream cheese. Cover and set aside. Heat the saute pan to medium high and add 2 tbsp butter, 2 whole cloves of garlic, and the thyme sprigs. Add the mushrooms back to the pan with the crispy side up. Tilt the pan to pool the simmering butter on one side and use a spoon to baste the mushrooms for about 30 seconds. Remove the pan from the heat.

### **Step 5: Plate the dish**

Add the grits to a plate with a high rim and surround them with sauce. Toss the cooked chard with the crispy bacon and add to the plate. Add the “scallops” on top and drizzle with more sauce. Serve the remaining sauce on the side and enjoy!

## **Meeting Information**

AMS meetings take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm CST via Zoom and are open to the public.

Join us March 7th where we will have a brief business meeting to discuss upcoming events and current projects. Then we will be joined by Dr. Michael Beug who will be talking to us about Morels and their look alikes here in Alabama!

Dr. Beug's professional accomplishments can scarcely be listed here in their entirety, but to touch on some of them: he is professor emeritus at The Evergreen State College in Washington State where he taught chemistry, mycology and organic farming for 32 years.

He is the author of *Mushrooms of Cascadia: an illustrated key* and coauthor of *Ascomycete Fungi of North America*. He was the Chair of the Toxicology Committee for the North American Mycological Association for many years. He has described many species of mushrooms, including multiple species of *Morchella*, has written for numerous journals and publications and his photographs have appeared in over 80 publications. He was the recipient of the 2006 NAMA Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology and so much more.

This is going to be a fantastic presentation that you are not going to want to miss!

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 893 6624 2938

Passcode: 18

## **2022 Scavenger Hunt**

We are starting up a brand new year of mushroom hunting! Find and properly identify as many mushrooms in Alabama as you can and win prizes at the end of the year! You get credit for finding the mushrooms when you add them to our project on iNaturalist. Read the full rules on our website [here](#). Any observations you upload to iNaturalist will be automatically submitted to the project after joining. Joining the project is easy!

1. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone or access it via the website [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org).
2. Sign up for free to make your account.
3. Join the iNaturalist project titled "AMS 2022 Scavenger Hunt"  
→Must be a paid AMS member to win←

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 [www.almushroomsoc@gmail.com](mailto:www.almushroomsoc@gmail.com)