



Bleeding-Tooth Fungus

Also known as: Strawberries and Cream Fungus, Red-Juice Tooth, or Devil's Tooth.

Bleeding-Tooth Fungus fits the description of “weird” with its strange colors and textures. This plant in the mushroom family is not poisonous, but it is considered inedible because of its extremely bitter taste. It is very uncommon, but this one was photographed several years ago in the pine woods at King’s Corner, in early to mid-autumn.

This species of fungus produces its spores on spines or “teeth.” The spores “bleed” as red droplets down those spines, so that it looks like blood against the whitish fungus. This liquid actually has an anticoagulant property similar to the medicine heparin; it keeps human or animal blood from clotting. This fungus turns brown with age.

Bloody-Tooth Fungus establishes a relationship with the roots of certain trees, so you will find it lower down on a tree’s trunk. The fungus exchanges the minerals and amino acids it has extracted from the soil, for oxygen and carbon within the host tree; and that allows the fungus to flourish. It’s a great partnership that benefits both, called symbiosis.

The woods of our Conservancy are moist enough to grow some really beautiful mushrooms and fungi. Come and see—but don’t touch or destroy. Fungi of all kinds should be respected for the role they play in the woodlands ecology.

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