Matchmaker: Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest

Below are written descriptions and images of fruiting bodies, mushrooms, of the fungal species in this ectomycorrhizal association. The information is from the web version of the Matchmaker: Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest (MMPNW) created by the Canadian Forest Service and based on the Windows MMPNW version 1.3 by Ian and Eli Gibson.

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LATIN NAME(S) Psilocybe cyanescens Wakefield Trans. Brit. Myc. Soc. 29: 141. 1946.

ENGLISH NAME(S) wavy-capped Psilocybe, cyans, blue halos, blueing Psilocybe, potent Psilocybe

NOTES fieldmarks include viscid peelable caramel-brown cap that fades as it dries, and often becomes wavy as it expands, blueing of flesh and stem, fleeting veil, and dark spores; common, found at least BC, WA, OR, also CA, United Kingdom (Scotland), Netherlands, (Guzman), CHEMICAL REACTIONS KOH stains flesh and cap reddish-yellow or reddish-brown (Guzman)

CAP 2-4(5)cm, obtusely conic to conic-convex at first, soon broadly convex, then flat or with an uplifted, often wavy margin; hygrophanous, chestnut brown becoming caramel brown, then fading to dark yellowish brown or ochraceous on drying; smooth, viscid when moist from separable gelatinous cap skin, margin translucent-striate, (Stamets), (1)2-5(7.5)cm, subconic or convex to bellshaped, becoming irregularly expanded flat-convex or flat to depressed, sometimes subumbonate; bald, (Guzman), 1.5-4(5), soon convex to broadly convex, then flat or with uplifted often wavy margin; dark brown or reddish-brown becoming caramel-brown, then fading to tan, yellowish-brown, or paler, sometimes with blue or blue-green stains, especially near margin; viscid when moist, smooth, (Arora)

FLESH nearly colored as cap and bruising bluish, (Stamets), "yellowish and pliant or fleshy in cap, whitish to orange-yellow and cartilaginous in stem mainly toward the base, easily staining blue when cut, (Guzman), thin; bruising blue or blue-green, (Arora)

Fred Stevens (MykoWeb)

Stan Czolowski

GILLS adnate to subdecurrent, close to somewhat distant, broad; cinnamon-brown becoming deep smoky-brown, edges whitish, (Stamets), adnate to sinuate, yellowish brown or orangish-brown to violaceous brown, sometimes somewhat mottled, with edges colored as faces or nearly whitish, (Guzman), typically adnate but sometimes seceding, fairly close; brown or cinnamon-brown becoming dark smoky-brown or sometimes bluish-stained, edges whitish, (Arora)

STEM 2-8cm x 0.2-0.5cm, equal or with an enlarged base, often curved, stiff but not pliant; whitish, but readily bruising bluish; silky, covered with fine fibrils, dry, often with long whitish rhizomorphs protruding about base of stem, (Stamets), (4)6-9(11)cm x (0.3)0.4-0.6(0.7)cm, equal, cylindric or somewhat bulbous, straight or sometimes irregularly flexuous (bent both ways), often with base curved, hard and cartilaginous, solid to hollow; white to whitish, readily changing to blue when bruised; silky-fibrillose or scabrous toward base, base with conspicuous white rhizomorphs, (Guzman), 3-8cm x 0.2-0.6(0.8)cm, equal or with widened base, sometimes curved; whitish but staining blue to bluish-green when handled or bruised, (Arora)

VEIL copiously cortinate, snow-white, rapidly deteriorating to an obscure ring zone, (Stamets), cortinate and well-developed, delicate and white when young, fleeting when mature or remnants remain, fibrillose in upper part of stem, no ring, (Guzman), "fibrillose or cobwebby, copious but disappearing or at most forming a very slight ring or hairy zone on stalk", (Arora)

ODOR farinaceous especially when young (Guzman)

TASTE farinaceous especially when young (Guzman)

EDIBILITY hallucinogenic and potent, especially raw, (Arora), along with azurescens, baeocystis, semilanceata and strictipes, the most powerful hallucinogenic mushrooms in the north temperate zone, one or two caps per dose, maximum of 0.3-1.7% psilocybin, 0.28-0.51% psilocin, 0.02-0.03% baeocystin, (Arora, Stamets)

HABITAT scattered to gregarious in humus enriched with woody debris, amongst leaves and twigs, in woodchips, sawdust, or in debris fields rich with rotting wood, often under mixed woods at the edges of lawns, along paths, and in heavily mulched rhododendron and rose gardens, grows well with rhododendrons, azaleas, lupines, (Stamets), gregarious, rarely scattered, sometimes forming rings, on humus or on very rotten wood mixed with soil, or on sawdust or soil mulched containing wood chips or bark, in deciduous forests, but also very common in gardens and under bushes, very rarely in grasses, (Guzman), widely scattered to densely gregarious on wood chips, sawdust, mulch, and humus, and on lawns rich in lignin, partial to conifer debris but also fond of alder and eucalyptus, (Arora)

SPORE DEPOSIT dark purplish-brown (Stamets), dark brown violet or fuscous (Guzman), purple-brown to purple-gray or purple-black, (Arora)

MICROSCOPIC spores 9-12 x 5-9 microns, elongate-elliptic, (Stamets); basidia 4-spored; pleurocystidia not reported by Wakefield, but collections in Pacific Northwest have abundant capitate pleurocystidia 17-33 x 5-8.8 microns, fusoid-ventricose to subpy

NAME ORIGIN means 'becoming blue'

SIMILAR like azurescens but wavy cap margin and lacks distinct umbo; like liniformans which does not have pleurocystidia; like baeocystis which has a more conical cap that is usually olive-brown when young and less copious veil; like strictipes with a long slender stem (4-13cm x 0.2-0.3cm)

SOURCES Stamets*, Guzman, Arora*, Lincoff(2)*, Ammirati(11)*

FAMILY Strophariaceae of Order Agaricales