



## OYSTER MUSHROOM LOGS

The tree oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) is native to hardwood forests. It is a primary decomposer of many types of broadleaf trees including but not limited to poplar, maple, oak, ash, beech, birch, and willows. It is commonly found growing in low lying forests from late spring to fall. Although usually growing on dead wood, it can be found on weakened or declining trees.

**Cultivation:** Logs for oyster cultivation can be inoculated like shiitake logs by drilling and plugging holes with spawn or a faster way is to cut wedges with the chainsaw and pack spawn in the cuts and nail the wedges back into place. Although this method is much faster, it uses considerably more spawn. Logs inoculated with a vigorous strain of oyster mushroom in the winter and spring and should begin fruiting in the fall of the same year. Live dormant trees are felled to provide the logs, as these have higher levels of tree sugars and nutrients stored in the wood to support fungal growth.

**Managing Oyster mushroom logs:** Maintaining log moisture content is critical to ensure the fungus survives and produces mushrooms. Sections of the log dry out rapidly when the bark is damaged, so use caution when handling the log. The idea is to rot the wood. Choose a shady, humid spot in your garden that you pass by frequently as the harvest window for excellent mushrooms is short and you want to beat the critters and insects to them. Place the log in contact with the ground. Do this by laying it horizontally directly on the ground, or use it to retain a garden bed or walking path that has shade cover. Or install the log as a totem. Bury the log vertically one-third of the length into the ground. With either method, as the fungus grows it will be able to translocate water from the ground. If there are extended dry periods, water the log as you water your garden.

**Harvesting mushrooms:** In the fall and perhaps in the spring, look for mushrooms after rainy days. The caps usually grow in clusters and are grey to brown in color. Use a knife to cut the caps away from the log taking care to minimize damage to the bark. Use the mushrooms fresh in your favorite recipe or dry them and store them for future use.

If you have questions about mushroom cultivation please email Mark Jones: [info@sharondalefarm.com](mailto:info@sharondalefarm.com) or call (434)296-3301

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