

Latin Name: **Pleurotus Ostreatus**

Ease of care: **Beginner level**

Common Name: **Oyster Mushroom**

Description:

Both the Latin and common name refer to the shape of the fruiting body. The Latin pleurotus (sideways) refers to the sideways-growth of the stem with respect to the cap while the Latin ostreatus (and the English common name, oyster) refers to the shape of the cap which resembles the bi-valve of the same name. Many also believe that the name is fitting due to the flavour resemblance to oysters.

The mushroom has a cap spanning 5–25 cm broad, fan or oyster-shaped; Natural specimens range from white to gray or tan to dark-brown; margin in rolled when young, smooth and often somewhat lobed or wavy. It often has the scent of anise due to the presence of benzaldehyde (which, however, smells more like almonds).



Understanding your log:

The basic premise of the log you have purchased is that it has been injected with mushroom spawn. You can see these injection points on your log where they have been sealed with wax. This spawn contains mycelium which will colonise through the log and so by feeding on and composting the wood, fruit and produce mushrooms. This fruiting action is also known as 'flushing'.

Care of your log:

The cultivation of mushrooms on logs requires a twin approach – stopping unwanted fungi setting in, whilst also keeping the desired mycelium alive and active to cultivate and flush. By cutting the right species of healthy tree, at the right time of year, and by injecting with the appropriate amount of spawn, competing forms of fungi should already have been kept at bay by the time you receive your log. However you will need to provide sufficient care to see the logs fruit effectively.

As a rule of thumb, treat your log as though it were a shade loving plant. Bury the log upright, approximately 3-4" deep, so that it looks like a tree stump. This should be ideally in a shady position, under a hedge or similar, but certainly out of direct sunlight. The most important consideration for your log is to maintain its moisture content. DO NOT LET IT DRY OUT. During hot periods, or if there has been little rainfall, maintain moisture content through regular spraying with rainwater or upending it in a bucket over night. The logs can also be covered loosely with tarp or leaves but air circulation is also important.

Flushing and harvest:

Oyster is a reasonably robust mushroom to grow when injected correctly, which is why we refer to these logs as beginner level. However, seasonal differences between varying years have shown that sometimes it can take a while for the logs to fruit. We estimate the first crop to be achievable between 12-18 months after inoculation. During the period of colonisation, it is common to see a white/brown fluff start to appear on the end of the logs. This often comes in the form of a cog or gear shape.

Once suitably colonised an oyster log should naturally flush throughout the year, but mainly in summer and autumn. Many people favour this natural approach and leave their log to do this. However, once established you can also force it to flush up to 4 times in a year by soaking it in cold water for 24-48 hours, with cropping occurring 7-14 days after soaking. The average oyster log lasts 3-4 years, though forcing flushing will significantly shorten the lifespan of the log. The water content of shiitake mushrooms is approximately 91%, so during the growth period watering the logs is recommended daily. Oyster mushrooms are best harvested before the cap flattens, usually when the mushrooms are convex in shape.

Pests:

Slugs and birds can both eat the spawn out from the logs, so be aware of their presence. Copper wire tied around the base of the logs can deter slugs. Remember, log cultivation is not an exact science; your log is a living organism with its own growing patterns. Good Luck! And enjoy the fruits of your 'labour'.



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