

IMPORTANT: Please be aware that there is a small possibility that a wild fungus could grow on your log and produce a different type of mushroom. **Some wild mushrooms are deadly poisonous**, so make sure to correctly identify your mushroom as a shiitake before eating!

Your log was inoculated with shiitake mycelium over one year ago. The fungus has been busy eating the insides of your log, and has gathered enough energy to fruit shiitake mushrooms. With a little care, your log will give you three or more years of good mushrooms to eat.

Your goal is to keep the inside of the log moist, while allowing the outside of the bark to dry. Keep your logs outdoors in a shaded, moist and well ventilated place where they will receive rain. Avoid direct sunshine. Temperatures over 40C can kill the mycelium, but freezing temperatures will do no harm. Handle your logs with care, especially as they age and the bark becomes more fragile. The bark is important for keeping moisture inside the log, while keeping competitor fungi out.

In the rainy season, your logs won't require any care as long as it rains periodically. However during the dry season, keep your logs hydrated by submerging in a rain-barrel overnight, or placing under a sprinkler for several hours, every couple of weeks. It is best to water deeply and then let the log surface dry out completely in between.

On Vancouver Island, outdoor logs will naturally produce mushrooms in the spring and the fall, as long as nature provides adequate rain. You can also "force" fruit the log by soaking in very cold water for 6-24 hours (a bag of ice in the water will help make it really cold), or sprinkle for about 24-48 hours. After soaking, physically shock the logs by dropping the end to the ground or banging the end with a mallet a couple of times. Keep the logs very wet for about one week and the logs should start to "flush" with mushrooms.

The mushrooms are at their prime for eating shortly after the veil has broken under the cap revealing the gills, and the edges of the cap are still turned under. To harvest, cut at the bottom of the stem or twist.

After harvesting the logs should be left to rest for 6-8 weeks so the mycelium can re-energize. Then soaking can be repeated to force them again if desired. This works fairly predictably, but some get their growth spurts earlier and some later. After fruiting regularly for a year or so, your log may take a break.

Shiitakes will keep for 2-3 weeks in the refrigerator. You can also dry them and store in a sealed container indefinitely. Blanched or sautéed shiitakes can be frozen for later use. Shiitakes are high in protein, vitamins, and minerals and have medicinal values.

Shiitake Mushroom Identification Features (*Lentinula edodes*)

- Growing on dead hardwood (not found wild on Vancouver Island)
- Cap 5-25cm wide, dark brown becoming lighter in age with white scales or tufts on the surface
- Cap shape convex, with the edges rolled under when young then flattening out with age
- Gills creamy white, bruising brown when damaged
- Stem fibrous and tough, white to light brown, with no ring
- Spores white (**Note:** *Galerina marginata*, a deadly mushroom, is also brown and grows on wood. It has a brown (not white) spore print.)

There are many pictures of shiitake mushrooms online.