



BUR - RAGWEED

Stinkhorns

by **George F. Ledingham, Regina**

Three times during 1959 and 1960 I have been asked to identify a rather rare and interesting plant. In each case, once each in Regina, Moose Jaw and Sintaluta, the plant was the stinkhorn *Mutinus caninus*. Mrs. E. L. Willoughby's letter of July 27, 1960, gives a good description of this plant.

Her description, in part, is as follows: "These things looked like small puff balls but when looked at had a skin like a soft-shelled hen's egg and the inside was a jelly-like substance which smelt like mushroom. From these balls, which were white, a finger-like growth appeared which was pink next to the ball and much

darker red on the outer half. These growths were over two inches long. When the finger-like part was opened it looked as if it was made from foam rubber."

The spores are produced on the outer surface of the red part of the finger-like structure. At this time, if Mrs. Willoughby had taken a good sniff, she would have noticed that the fungus had a very disagreeable odour. The smell attracts the flies and they carry the spores to other parts of the garden on their feet. The fungus grows saprophytically in the soil, perhaps for a long time, as a mycelium, much as mushrooms grow.