

Just as interesting however, are some crucifers to which we apply the designation of weeds. The mustard family contains many plants admirably adapted to become weeds if given the opportunity of doing so.

Hare's-ear mustard (*Conringia orientalis*), an annual or winter annual growing up to a height of two feet, was introduced from Europe. The leaves are bluish-green, up to 5

inches long, alternate and clasping the stem with earlike basal lobes. The small, creamy-white flowers are borne at the end of the stems and ripen into long, narrow, 4-angled erect pods. The seeds are brownish with a distinctive white projection at the lower end, and may cause poisoning when fed in grain. The young plants have a whitish bloom and resemble cabbage seedlings.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MUSHROOMS?

by **Connie B. Pratt**, 3136 Rae St., Regina

It is seldom that reports or photographs of fungi appear in the *Blue Jay*, and yet this is a subject that can become a fascinating study. Having begun myself to make a study of fungi, and particularly of the mushrooms, I want to appeal to other interested people to submit their observations to our magazine, which is intended to include many phases of natural history.

Mushrooms are of interest to us in many ways. To begin with, many people are interested in them as a source of food and in knowing which species are edible. Care should be taken when eating a new species of mushroom for the first time even when it is considered edible, for some species will make certain individuals ill while their companions enjoy the delicacy. Biologically speaking, one of the chief functions of the mushroom is to aid in the breakdown of dead organic material. Some trees cannot thrive without the presence of their fungus associates. Another interest in the mushrooms comes from scientists who are studying them as a possible source of antibiotic substances.

The great number of species that occur, the wide variety in form and colour, and the surprise of finding something different in the same locality under varying weather conditions add to the fascination of studying and photographing the mushrooms.

In identifying mushrooms I have found the following texts helpful:

J. Walton Groves, *Edible and poisonous mushrooms of Canada* (Queen's Printer, Ottawa. 1962. \$6.00.)

J. Walton Groves, *Mushroom collecting for beginners* (Canada Dept. of Agriculture, Publication 861, Ottawa. 1958. Free.)

Alexander H. Smith, *The Mushroom hunter's field guide*, (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. 1963. \$6.95.)



Photo by C. B. Pratt

Narrow-capped Morel (*Morchella angusticeps*). Ascomycetes. Edible. Woods along Hanson Lake Road, June, 1965.



Photo by C. B. Pratt

Shaggy Mane (*Coprinus comatus*). Basidiomycetes. Edible. Lawn in Regina, August 1966.

University of Michigan Press. 1963.  
\$6.95.)

I find that one needs to use several guides, for no text will have all of the species of mushroom listed. These guides will also give you an introduction to the structural parts of the mushroom, and illustrations by which you can become familiar with these principal parts.

When you find a mushroom you wish to identify, record a description of it in the fresh state—the location where the mushroom was found, its height, size of “stipe” or stem, shape of “pileus” or cap, colour, odour, etc. Mushrooms are easily damaged. Some can be stored overnight in a cool place, but others do not stay fresh and should be examined and described at once. Mushrooms should never be preserved in a fluid, but if properly dried they will keep indefinitely.

Fungi have an interesting place in the plant kingdom, belonging to the Thallophyta, which are simple plants not differentiated into true roots, stems or leaves. The Fungi do not contain chlorophyll and must depend for their food upon organic matter synthesized by other organisms. They grow either as saprophytes or parasites. The Fungi are divided into two sub-groups—the Pseudomycetes and the Eumycetes, and the Eumycetes are again divided into four main divisions—the Phycomycetes, Ascomycetes, Basidiomycetes and Fungi Imperfecti. Most of our mushrooms belong to the division Basidiomycetes. These terms sound forbidding at first, but they are really no more so than the names of flowers and birds, and any good guide will show you how the mushrooms fit into their place in the plant world.