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Fungus of the Month - October 2008



Trichoglossum hirsutum - black earth tongue

Black earth tongues, species of *Trichoglossum* and *Geoglossum*, are usually found fruiting in moss beds in the bush or sometimes on lawns. They are easily distinguished by their flat spade- or tongue-shaped head atop a black or dark grey brown stem. When fully developed they are 2.5-7 cm tall. There are only a few species and they are not easily distinguished with the naked eye. Species of *Trichoglossum* differ from *Geoglossum* by having a covering of short hairs or bristles that give them a velvety texture. There are two common species of earth tongues in WA, *T. hirsutum* and *G. glutinosum*. *G. glutinosum* generally has a smooth black head and a glutinous or slippery grey-brown stem, whereas *T. hirsutum* is velvety, black all over with a dry stem.

The Latin names for both species describe their appearance: *geo*-: earth, *trich* -: hair(s), *gloss* -: tongue, *hirsute* -: hirsute (hairy), *gluten*: sticky or viscid substance, *-osum*: denotes fullness or abundance.