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Fungus of the Month - November 2008



Plectania sp. The black cup fungus

Plectania sp. is an unnamed cup fungus. It is common in spring in the wetter jarrah and karri forest where it fruits on and amongst bark and twigs in deep litter. It is often found in conjunction with moss, either on the ground or on decayed logs. It is easily recognised by its tough black cup-shaped fruit body that is up to 1.5 cm diameter with a wrinkled texture and radially indented margin. The cup has a tough black stem with a root-like mass of fungal mycelium radiating from its base deep into the litter.

When the cups are small and undeveloped (*inset*) they are well camouflaged, resembling karri or jarrah fruits that have fallen into the litter, and which turn black just before they start to decay.

The Latin name for the genus may refer to the root-like mass that penetrates into the litter: *plect*:- plaited, twined or twisted