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Fungus of the Month - May 2011



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Anthracobia muelleri

Anthracobia muelleri is a tiny disc-shaped fungus that fruits prolifically on burnt soil in the autumn following a summer bushfire. Discs are circular, 2-5 mm diameter, but densely crowded and often distorted, dull to bright orange in colour with a fringe of short dark hairs around the margin. The underside of the discs is the same colour as the upper surface and generally has only a rudimentary stem or no visible stem at all. There are a number of other species of *Anthracobia*, but they are difficult to distinguish from *A. muelleri* which appears to be the most common species.

Species of *Anthaocobia* are also similar to species of *Pulvinula* which are also common on burnt sites. *Pulvinula archeri* (see inset) also fruits prolifically and ranges in colour from dull to bright orange, but the margin is smooth, not decorated with hairs.

The scientific name pertains to its post-fire habit and also honours Baron Ferdinand von Mueller (1825-1896) who was appointed Government Botanist for the colony of Victoria in 1853 and director of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens from 1857-73. *Anthrac-*: coal or charcoal, *muelleri*: after Baron von Mueller. Similarly *P. archerii* is named in honour of Tasmanian botanist, architect and politician William Archer (1820-1874).