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Artomyces austropiperatus

Richard Robinson, DEC Science Division, Manjimup, richard.robinson@dec.wa.gov.au



The crowned coral fungus *Artomyces austropiperatus*, is common in the wetter regions of eucalypt forest and woodlands in the south west. It fruits from late autumn through winter on well-rotted wood, which is often hidden under or within deep leaf and twig litter.

The crowned coral fungus has a distinct crown-like branching pattern that gives rise to its common name and makes it easy to distinguish from other coral-like fungi. The fruit body is generally 30-80 mm tall and up to 70 mm wide. The branch surface is smooth, pinkish beige or fawn in colour with circular crown-like tips. The structures may arise from a single stem or several stems may be clustered together and joined or fused at the base. Another distinguishing feature is a lingering peppery taste (which can be experienced if a small crushed piece is placed on the tip of your tongue – eating it is not recommended)

A similar species, *Artomyces colensoi*, also grows on wood and also has a similar peppery taste. However it is smaller, has a simpler branching pattern, and has only been recorded in Tasmania and Victoria and therefore may not occur in Western Australia.

The scientific name refers to the dense structure and distinctive taste of the fruit body. *Artus*:- close, confined or tight - *myces*: fungus or mushroom, *austro*:- refers to its Australian origins, *piperat*:- peppery.