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Cortinarius austroviolaceous — violet cort

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

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Cortinarus austroviolaceus is found in several regions of southern Australia where it fruits on the ground in eucalypt forests and woodlands. In Tasmania it's also found in myrtle beech (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) forest. However, it doesn't appear to be especially common in Western Australia, but its distinctive colour and size make it easy to recognise. The whole fruit body is dark violet in colour, sometimes so dark it appears to be black.

Caps are up to 6.5cm broad, convex at first then become flat with age. Gills appear to be crowded, with alternate ones extending only half the distance from the cap margin to the stem and in older specimens there may be rusty patches of spore powder on the surface of the gill face. Stems are generally sturdy, up to 7.5cm tall and 1.5cm broad. The upper stem may be lighter on colour with fine dark violet scales on the surface.

A number of *Cortinarius* fungi are purple or violet, but none are as dark as *Cortinarius austroviolaceus*. In other parts of the world a very similar species, *Cortinarius violaceous,* can be found in deciduous forests in Europe and conifer forests in North America. A similar species is also found in southern beech forests (*Nothofagus* spp.) in New Zealand.

The scientific name for the genus refers to the membranous or fragile cobweb-like veil that protects the gills in the immature or 'button' stage of development; on *Cortinarius violaceus* it is cobweb-like and rapidly deteriorates. *Cortin-*: from *cortina* or curtain, *-ius*: resembling or similar, *austro-*: from the south, *viol-*: violet, *-eus*: colour of.