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Fungus of the Month - July 2009



Fistulina spiculifera - beefsteak fungus

Fistulina spiculifera, the beefsteak fungus, is a common fungus that fruits on living or dead jarrah trees. Hoof-shaped brackets develop on trees and stumps in the autumn. The fungus produces a very slow decay in the heartwood of jarrah trees resulting in a condition known as “pencilling”. The brackets have a firm texture; young specimens are purple red and mature to a liver brown colour (*inset*) with well defined radial wrinkles on the upper surface. Cutting or slicing it reveals a firm juicy marbled flesh (*inset*), hence the common name. The aboriginal name for *Fistulina spiculifera* is “numar”. Note the two fungus flies, *Tapeigaster* sp., on the lower surface. Fungus flies lay their eggs in fungal fruit bodies and their larvae feed and develop within them.

The Latin name refers to the structure of the pores on the underside which resembles small pipes stacked together. *Fistul*:- tube or pipe, *-ina*: resembling. What *spiculifera* refers to is not clear.