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## Fungus of the Month - Jan/Feb 2010



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### *Peziza tenacella* - purple cup fungus

*Peziza tenacella* is a reasonably common cup fungus found in the autumn following summer bushfires in karri and jarrah forest as well as other recently burnt woodlands and coastal habitats. It is easily recognised by its distinctive cup-shaped fruit bodies that are deep purple and smooth on the inside and white with a pimpled surface on the outside. The cups may be up to 2 cm in diameter and may be found as single fruit bodies or in groups of up to 12 or more.

*Peziza tenacella* is rarely found on ground that has not been recently burnt.

There are a number of cup- and disc-shaped fungi that are only found in recently burnt bush or woodlands. They are commonly known as pyrophilous or fire-loving fungi and seem to prefer the alkaline soil conditions that prevail immediately after fire. *Peziza pratensis* is a similar fungus, also found after fire, but is distinguished from *P. tenacella* by its variable, brown to violet, colour and flatter-shaped fruit bodies (inset). Pyrophilous fungi are most prevalent in the first autumn after fire and are only found in low numbers for the following year or two.

The Latin/Greek scientific name refers to it having no stem and to its resiliance; *peziza*: ancient term for a mushroom with little or no stem, *tenac-*: tenacious, *-ella*: small or diminutive.