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Fungus of the Month - January 2011



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Russula sp. 'multicolor'

The true identity of *Russula* sp. is uncertain. It is very similar to *Russula kalimna* found in south eastern Australia and *Russula cyanoxantha* found in the northern hemisphere, but differs from both microscopically. In Western Australia, this species is often referred to as *Russula* 'multicolor'. It is a common species in wetter jarrah forest and karri and tingle forest. It has large mushrooms that vary in colour and are generally mottled with varying proportions of faded red, yellow-grey, dull greyish or bluish green, creamy yellow and cream. The cap is up to 90 mm diameter, dome-shaped at first (*see inset*) then expands to be broad with a depressed centre. The gills are crowded and cream in colour. The stem is creamy white up to 70 mm tall.

In contrast *Russula kalimna* generally has a short stout stem and the cap surface tends to develop fine cracks. Despite the uncertainty of its identity and the variations in colour, *Russula* 'multicolor' is a quite distinct and beautiful fungus.

The scientific names of all species mentioned refer to their multicoloured appearances. *Russ-*: reddish (likely referring to the colour of the Northern hemisphere type specimen for *Russula*, *Russula emetrica*, which has a red cap); *kalimna*: Aboriginal term meaning beautiful; *cyan-*: blue, *xanth-*: yellow.