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Fungus of the Month - July 2011



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Marasmius crinisequi

Marasmius crinisequi, or the horse hair fungus, is very common in jarrah forest during the wetter winter months. It is small, but fruits prolifically on fallen jarrah leaves. It is often found in protected patches near large logs or in depressions where the litter tends to stay wetter. The cap is brown in colour dome-shaped then umbrella-shaped, up to 5 mm diameter. It has pallid brown gills which are relatively few in number and widely spaced. Stems are relatively long (40-50 mm), very thin and dark brown in colour but gradually lighten to dull buff just below the cap. The common name, horse hair fungus, is derived from the relatively tough texture, colour and shape of the stem.

Marasmius crinisequi is very similar in appearance to a less common, and as yet undetermined, species of *Micromphale*. However, *Micromphale* sp. (inset above) can be easily distinguished from *Marasmius crinisequi* by its strong garlic odour and its habit of growing only on fallen needles of *Allocasuarina* (sheoak) trees.

The scientific name refers to the appearance of the fruit body. *Marasm-*: withered, emaciated, *-ius*: pertaining to, characteristic of or resembling, *crin-*: hair, *equi*: equine or horse.