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Fungus of the Month - March 2011



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Russula adusta

Russula adusta is common in all wetter eucalypt forests and woodlands of the south west in early- to mid-autumn. It generally fruits singly or in small scattered groups under thick leaf litter and is not easily seen. It is a large mushroom with a light brown cap up to about 80 mm diameter which has a deep central depression. The surface of the cap is slippery when wet (*see inset photo*). The gills are creamy white with various lengths and are sometimes joined together by small interconnecting vein-like ridges. The stem is up to 50 mm tall, creamy white with a brown blush and stains dirty brown when handled. Young stems are solid but they become hollow with age. Fresh young mushrooms may have a soapy odour and if cut or damaged their creamy flesh stains pale orange-red. Old specimens smell like rotting fish.

Russula adusta is similar to *Russula albonigra*, which turns black with age or when damaged. *Russula adusta* is more common, does not blacken and *Russula adusta* does not have a soapy odour. However, both (and other *Russulas*) may smell fishy when old.

What does the scientific name mean? *Russ-*: reddish (likely refers to the red coloured cap of the Northern hemisphere type specimen for *Russula*, *Russula emetrica*), *-ula*: pertaining to, *adust-*: scorched.