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Phellogen niger — black toothed fungus

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Phellodon niger, the black toothed fungus, is a tough leathery fungus that belongs to a group that have spines forming the spore bearing layer on the underside of the cap. It is common in karri and the wetter regions of jarrah forest fruiting in groups in deep leaf litter. It is well disguised as its colour blends in with wet well-decayed leaves.

Caps grow to about 5cm diameter, often with several fused together to form multi-stemmed structures. It has a felt-like radially patterned surface that is generally black with concentric zones of dark brown and a white margin. The crowded spines on the underside are dark grey-black to purple, and about 2-3mm long. They do not extend on to the margin of the underside but may extend a short distance down the upper stem. Stems are tough, black or very dark brown-black and often flattened and grooved along their length. When the fruit bodies dry out, they have a strong odour of fenugreek.

The scientific name refers to its characteristic texture and colour. *Phell-*: cork, *odon-*, *odont-*: tooth, teeth, *niger-*: black.