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Hypomyces chrysospermus

Richard Robinson, Science Division, Manjimup, richard.robinson@dec.wa.gov.au

Species of *Hypomyces* are common parasites of other fungi. They appear to be host specific or infect closely related host species. *Hypomyces chrysospermus* infects bolete fungi and their relatives, and is commonly called the bolete eater. Boletes are fungi that produce mushrooms with a layer of pores on the underside of the cap (instead of the more usual gills). In Western Australia, boletes are found in the southwest in early autumn, and towards mid-autumn many become infected.

The life cycle of *Hypomyces chrysospermus* is complex but intriguing, with three distinct stages. The first stage is a white cottony mould that engulfs the bolete mushroom. Next a distinctive bright yellow powdery coating develops (*left*). The white and yellow stages are anamorphic, or asexual, forms of the parasite. The final stage is a well-formed but delicate creamy grey to light khaki skin-like covering embedded with small dark pimples (*right*). The pimples are the necks of tiny flask-like structures (*see cross section inset above*) which are the actual fruit bodies of the parasite and where the sexual spores are produced. The final stage is rarely seen, or more often ignored, because it generally develops after the host has decayed beyond recognition and has become slimy and very smelly.

The scientific name refers to the parasitic nature and distinctive asexual stage of the fungus. *Hypo-*: below, or under, -*myc*: fungus, mushroom, *chrys-*: golden, *sperm-*: seed.

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