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Amanita muscaria — fly agaric

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Amanita muscaria is not a native fungus. It's native to the northern hemisphere where it's found in both conifer and hardwood forests. In eastern Australia and New Zealand the fly agaric is common in pine plantations where it's used purposely as a beneficial mycorrhizal partner for radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*) trees. In parts of Tasmania and Victoria, however, it has spread into native myrtle beech (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) forests. It has never been purposely introduced into Western Australia but in recent years has been reported, not in pine plantations but in gardens and parks, in areas including the Perth Hills, Manjimup and Margaret River under introduced pines, birch and oak trees.

Amanita muscaria is a very distinctive fungus. Caps are large, up to 20cm diameter, dome-shaped at first then flat and finally up-turned, bright orange-red with white patchy scales on the surface. Gills are white and very crowded. Stems are up to 20cm tall, thick, white with a distinctive skirt-like veil just below the cap and a bulbous sometimes scaly base. The surface is smooth above the veil and scaly or powdery below.

The scientific name refers to the ancient practice of using a mixture consisting of pieces of the mushroom and milk to stupefy flies. *Amanita*:- is an ancient term for mushroom, *musca*:- a fly, *aria*:- possessing, relating to.