

MUSHROOM TIME

BY KATHERINE CLOUGH

It has been a superb summer for mushrooms here in Quebec City. We had a shower of rain almost every day in July and that kept the ground and undergrowth moist and the fungi very happy.

One species that has been very abundant is the fairy ring mushroom '*Marasmius oreades*'. Appearing on lawns, often in rings but sometimes in clumps, this small (cap 1 - 1½" diam.) tan-coloured mushroom is an excellent edible. It must be carefully identified to avoid being confused with the poisonous *Clitocybe dealbata*.

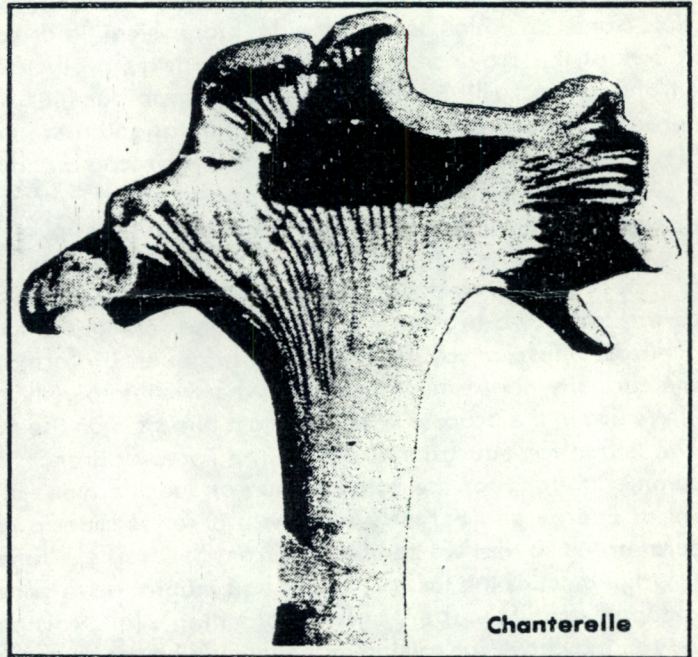
Marasmius oreades grows underground as a network of threads known as mycelium. Growth starts at one point and radiates out in all directions. When temperature and moisture conditions are suitable, mushrooms are produced at the advancing edge of the mycelium, hence the ring.

In early times, the rings were declared as magic places where treasure was hidden and where fairies danced in the moonlight.

While the 'fairy ring mushroom' has been abundant I have had difficulty finding chanterelles. They are not as abundant as they are in the Maritime provinces. Their favourite habitat, coniferous trees, is not common in this area of Quebec, where hardwood forests are dominant.

Chanterelles are highly prized though. I saw some poor-looking specimens selling for \$3.50 per 100 g. in a local fruit and vegetable market.

Quebeckers take mushrooms and mushrooming very seriously. Many of the people I have met since coming here a year ago display an interest and often a great deal of knowledge about collecting, identifying and cooking wild mushrooms. The 'Cercle Mycologique' is a group of amateur mycologists which meets every Monday night in the fall to compare and identify the weekend's collections. I hope to join them this fall and learn more about Quebec mushrooms - maybe even where to look for morels next spring!



ISLAND WATERWAYS IN DANGER

Island waterways are having a hard time this summer. The P.E.I. Wildlife Federation is concerned because of the recent appearance of a problem called white water.

"This is a condition caused by the absence of oxygen due to a buildup of algae hastened by warm water and aided by the erosion of fertilizers and soils into the water systems," said Federation president Paul Gallant in a news release.

"The white water symptom is a warning being presented to us by nature," explained Mr. Gallant. "Too many of our waterways are being deluged by sediment and fertilizers, chemicals, etcetera, due to man's unwillingness to adjust his habits."

He pointed out that many see it as it being easier to plow an area that should be a buffer zone rather than plant trees. "It's more profitable to cut the trees in the forest next to a brook than to leave them."

The P.E.I. Wildlife Federation has planned a one-day seminar with other interested groups. They also hope to provide government agencies with solutions "for immediate action to save our waterways."

Interested organizations can contact the P.E.I. Wildlife Federation, Box 413, Souris, P.E.I. for more information.