

Shiitake Mushroom Grower's Fact Sheet

Growing shiitake mushrooms is like growing any other perennial in your garden. There is a short period where very little is realized in terms of what you can see or pick. Therefore, it is important to have patience when starting to cultivate shiitake mushrooms. It will take from 10 to 14 months for your work to bear mushrooms. The kit has all the items you will need to grow shiitake mushrooms. All you have to provide is the growing medium in the form of wood logs (twice the size of a piece of firewood), or roughly 2-4" diameter by 40" long or equivalent. Below are some pointers on growing shiitake mushrooms successfully from someone who has grown over 300 pounds of shiitake mushrooms a year over the last 15 years.

One kit will inoculate (plug) 10 logs 2-4" diameter and 40" long. Smaller diameter logs have more sapwood which makes it easier for the shiitake spawn to colonize. White Oak species work best (white, bur, swamp white, etc.). Other species that will work include red oak species (red, black, scarlet, or pin), ironwood, hickory and sweet gum. These logs need to be fresh – cut anytime from September 2017-April 2018. Contact local logging or tree service companies if you need a source of wood logs. It is a good idea to have these ready when you get your kit or shortly after so you don't procrastinate. If you can't plug logs within 2-3 weeks of receiving your kit, put it in the refrigerator until ready.

Use a 3/8" drill bit to drill the holes in the logs for the plugs. Drill holes deep enough to make sure the plug does not stick up above the bark. Seal with the bees wax to keep plugs moist and insects out.

After plugging, locate a shady, protected area away from the sun and wind to lay your logs. Logs can be shaded by placing branches or burlap bags over the top. They will need to stay here for at least one year so pick a good spot out of the way and don't forget them. This is where all the action takes place. The plugs you put in the logs grow under the bark and colonize the log with shiitake spawn and will eventually mature to produce the shiitake mushrooms.

After approximately 10-12 months, it's time to prepare your logs to grow shiitake mushrooms. The actual timing of this depends on weather, but it should occur early to mid spring. If it has been a relatively dry winter, it will take longer for the spawn run to take place. A good indicator is the white mycelium (spawn) at the end of logs or small bumps called "pins" around the inoculation site. Some logs can spawn in as little as 10 months and some can take over 12 months. Remember to have PATIENCE. Once you feel spawning has taken place, soak the logs for 24 hours in cold water then, using a hammer, strike the end of the logs several times really hard. In the orient this is called the soak and shock treatment. Just do it. IT WORKS!!!

Next, set your logs up at a 45 degree angle against a tree trunk or similar object in a shaded area that is protected from sun and wind. Remember, mushrooms are 90% water and can dry out real fast when the relative humidity gets below 50%. Old burlap, or landscape clothe, can help retain moisture during mushroom fruiting.

After logs fruit, they need a 4 week resting time before being forced to fruit again. Also remember to flip the logs so the spawn will run evenly. Simply turn the bottom of the log to the top after fruiting.

Your logs can last up to 4 years after plugging and will provide mushrooms during the spring, cool summer and fall. Store mushrooms in a paper bag in the refrigerator.

Good luck and have patience...you will be rewarded with many years of good eating!!

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