

Shiitake Mushroom Logs

General Information:

Shiitake mushrooms are an easy and delicious crop to grow. All you need is a shady outdoor area that gets little to no direct sunlight to be successful at growing your own shiitake mushrooms.

Most commercial shiitake mushrooms are grown in a climate controlled indoor environment in sawdust bags and thus do not generally have the same taste. Each log will produce shiitake mushrooms up to 3 times per year for a 3-4 year period if handled properly. Keep in mind that the first year's harvest is usually of lower yields, but will increase in subsequent years as the shiitake mycelium grow and becomes more established within the log.

Harvesting Instructions:

After a certain time and under the right conditions, your log will start to fruit and produce mushrooms on its own. However, you may choose to speed up the process for a more regular harvest of mushrooms up to 3 times a year. This is done by "shocking the log".

1. When the outdoor daytime temperatures have warmed to 18-20 °C, submerge the log in a container of COLD water overnight for at least 10 hours. Use the coldest water possible.
2. Place a weight on the log to keep it submerged. You may leave the log outside, place it in the fridge (if you have the space), in a cold room, or other suitable area. Be sure to soak the logs for 6-18 hours. The older the log, the less time you will need to soak it because it is naturally more porous. Irritating with a sprinkler for 24-48 hours also works, although the results won't be the same as soaking the logs.
3. Thump the log. Remove the log from the water and with a firm grip, smack both ends of the log on a hard surface gently but firm. You can also use a hammer and hit both ends of the log with a sharp rap. This will help wake the shiitake spawn. At this time, you may find that some or all of the wax plugs have fallen away. This is normal and there is no harm done to your log.
4. Stand the log on its end and place it directly on the ground. For condo/apartment balconies or sunnier areas, consider placing a tarp, large cardboard box, or other barrier around your log (but not touching) to further ensure that the log does not receive direct sun.
5. Within a few days, mushroom "buds" will start to appear anywhere on the log. Sometimes for the very first cycle, there will be only a few mushrooms. Other times, the entire log will be covered. Each cycle can and probably will be different. If no

shiitakes appear the very first time, let the log rest for 3 weeks, and soak and activate it again.

6. Once the mushrooms have grown and appear well rounded with gills open underneath, it is time to harvest your crop of mushrooms. Pick the mushrooms by pinching the base of the stem, and twisting or cutting them off with a sharp knife.
7. When all the mushrooms have been harvested, leave the log in a shaded area where it will benefit from the rain and its natural environment. Let the logs rest for approximately 7 weeks before you soak the log again. If the weather is very hot and dry, consider watering the log with a hose or soaking it overnight to ensure that it does not dry out.
8. When the fall harvest is over, place the log on its side for the winter. Again, ensure the log is in a shady, wind protected area as the winter wind and sun can damage the log and dry it out. A covering of snow is ideal. Logs can also be kept in an unheated enclosure as well.

General Care and Maintenance:

- Place the logs in a shady, wind protected area to avoid having the log dry out completely and to avoid overheating.
- Place the log in a well ventilated area and not in standing water. Stand the log on its end, lean it against another object for support.
- From Spring through Fall, shock the logs every 7-8 weeks for harvest of shiitake mushrooms
- Hose the log down every week or every other week to keep the log moist if it hasn't rained 1" per week

FAQs

Q. I have a partial shade area of my yard. Can I still grow mushrooms?

A. Yes, what we will recommend is for you to get a tarp, large cardboard box, or some other object to provide additional shade for your log. The key is to keep the log moist (not saturated)

Q. How long will the log last and produce mushrooms?

A. With proper care the logs will last for 4-5 years on average

Q. What kind of logs do you use?

A. Our shiitake mushroom logs are cut from trees in Wisconsin and Michigan. They have not been exposed to any pesticides, herbicides, or other chemicals. These logs have been cut in the middle of winter to ensure the optimal moisture and sugar content of the log for the shiitakes to grow.

Q. When can I expect to harvest my mushrooms?

A. The logs will fruit outdoors anywhere from May to November depending on the conditions

Q. What if I skip a cycle and don't shock the log? Will there be any adverse effects?

A. There will not be any adverse effects of skipping a cycle. What will happen is that the log may fruit spontaneously due to the right environmental conditions, or the mycelium will continue digesting the wood inside the log and produce larger mushrooms the next time you shock it.

Q. Can I put my log inside and still grow mushrooms?

A. We do not suggest or recommend storing the logs and growing mushrooms in an indoor environment. An indoor environment is not the ideal environment for the logs due to the lack of humidity in the air, the lack of day/night cycles, and the lack of rainfall.

Q. How are the logs prepared?

A. The winter is when the trees must be cut and inoculated. This is when the sugar content in the logs is at the best range. Next about a dozen holes are drilled into each log where the shiitake plugs will be placed. After all the plugs are put in, the holes will be capped with styrofoam plugs and left to incubate for one year. The logs are ready to fruit the following spring.

Q. What happens if the wax plugs fall out of the log?

A. There will be no negative effects as the wax plugs will naturally fall out of the log during the shocking or fruiting process over time.

Q. What happens to the log after 4-5 years?

A. After the log has given all it can to the shiitake mycelium, you will need to order another log in order to grow more mushrooms. The old log can be used as firewood.

Q. How important is the bark of the log?

A. The integrity of the bark is very important as it is the “skin” of your log. It keeps moisture in and external organisms out. The bark is negatively affected by UV rays and by consistent wetness/dampness. The logs should be handled with care as they age as the bark becomes more fragile.

Q. Do I need to make sure the log looks moist all the time?

A. No, the most important thing is to maintain the internal moisture content levels of the log. It is natural for the bark of the log to look and feel dry as it prevents the premature deterioration of the bark.

Q. I think my log may have dried out, what do I do?

A. If you think your log has dried out, you may still be able to save it. Engage in more frequent soakings of the log once a week for 2-4 weeks to increase the internal moisture content of your log. Make sure to use cold water and add plenty of additional ice when soaking.

Q. How quickly will the mushrooms develop after shocking the log?

A. The speed of fruiting depends on the ambient temperature and humidity. Spring and Fall growth is usually slow, while Summer fruitings can mature in a couple of days. The mushrooms should be harvested shortly after the veil has broken under the cap revealing the gills.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us:

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