

Hudson Valley Appalachian Trail Mushroom Guide

Know Before You Pick

■ **Sprout** (the experienced father) & **Scout** (the curious son) — your field companions for safe foraging on the AT through Hudson Valley, NY

Peak Season: June – August

Appalachian Trail • Hudson Valley, New York

Featuring 7 Edible Species • 6 Toxic Species with Look-alike Warnings

☎ **POISON CONTROL: 1-800-222-1222**

■ **EDIBLE SPECIES** 7 species you may find on the AT

■ **TOXIC SPECIES** 6 dangerous species + look-alike warnings

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Safety & How to Use This Guide

■ **IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER** This guide is for informational and educational purposes only. Never consume any wild mushroom without confirmation from a certified mycologist or experienced forager. Identification can be challenging even for experts — environmental variation, growth stage, and regional differences all affect appearance. **When in doubt, leave it out.** The authors and Spore & Scout are not responsible for any illness resulting from foraging decisions.

☎ **POISON CONTROL: 1-800-222-1222 — Call immediately if any mushroom is ingested and you are unsure of identification.**

How to Use This Guide

- Each entry shows the species name, peak season, key identification features, preferred habitat, and look-alike warnings.
- Always check ALL features listed before making any identification — one matching feature is not enough.
- This guide covers the Hudson Valley section of the AT where these species are most commonly encountered.
- Green entries = edible species (with caution). Red entries = toxic species to avoid.
- Take photos of anything you find — top, underside, stem, base, and cut cross-section.
- Never eat a mushroom solely based on this guide. Use it as a starting point, then verify with additional resources.
- If you are new to foraging, go out with an experienced forager for your first several outings.

Key terms used in this guide:

Gills: Blade-like structures on the underside (true gills run from edge toward stem)

Forked ridges: Fork-like raised veins — not true gills (key feature of chanterelles)

Pores: Tiny holes on the underside instead of gills (polypores, boletes)

Volva: A cup-like structure at the base of the stem — a key Amanita warning sign

Ring / Annulus: A skirt-like ring on the upper stem — another Amanita warning sign

Spore print: Color of spores deposited on paper after resting cap overnight

■ EDIBLE SPECIES

These species are edible when correctly identified. Always verify ALL features. Always consult an expert before eating any wild mushroom.



1. Golden Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*

Peak: June – August

ID Features:

Golden yellow, funnel shaped. False gills (forked ridges — NOT true blade-like gills). Fruity apricot smell. Solid white flesh when cut. Cap edges wavy and irregular.

Habitat:

Mixed hardwood and conifer forests, often near oaks and beeches. Very common on the AT through Hudson Valley. Usually found singly from soil, not in clusters.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Jack-o-Lantern (*Omphalotus olearius*) — TOXIC. Key difference: Jack-o-Lantern has TRUE gills (not forked ridges), grows in clusters at tree base, not singly from soil. See toxic section.



2. Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus*

Peak: July – October

ID Features:

Bright orange and sulfur-yellow shelf fungus. Grows in overlapping brackets (shelves) on trees. No gills — smooth pore surface on underside. Meaty texture.

Habitat:

Growing on dead or dying oaks, common on the AT trail corridor. Less often on other hardwoods.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Generally safe to identify — bright color and shelf growth are distinctive. Note: some people have sensitivity reactions, especially when growing on conifers. Try a small amount first.



3. Hen of the Woods / Maitake *Grifola frondosa*

Peak: September – October (late season)

ID Features:

Grey-brown overlapping frond-like caps, grows in large rosette clusters at the base of oaks. Pore surface on underside (no gills). Can be very large — several pounds.

Habitat:

Base of oaks along the AT corridor. Hudson Valley is excellent maitake territory. Check large old oaks.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Berkeley's Polypore (edible but bitter) — check for grey-brown color and confirm it's at the base of oak.



4. Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus*

Peak: May – November

ID Features:

Fan or oyster shaped, white to grey (sometimes bluish). Grows on dead wood. Gills run down the stem (decurrent). Mild anise or sweet smell. No stem or very short off-center stem.

Habitat:

Dead hardwood logs and stumps along the trail. Especially after rain.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Angel Wings (*Pleurocybella porrigens*) — much smaller, pure white, grows on conifers only.
Mock Oyster (*Phyllotopsis nidulans*) — orange color, very foul smell.



5. Black Trumpet / Horn of Plenty *Craterellus cornucopioides*

Peak: July – September

ID Features:

Dark grey to black, hollow trumpet shape. Smooth outer surface — no true gills. Grows in clusters. Thin, fragile walls. Excellent flavor when dried.

Habitat:

Hardwood forests near oaks and beeches, moist areas along trail. Often hidden in leaf litter — look carefully.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Very distinctive once you know it. No dangerous look-alikes. The hollow trumpet shape and dark color are unique.



6. Hedgehog Mushroom *Hydnum repandum*

Peak: August – October

ID Features:

Cream to tan cap, irregular wavy edges. TEETH (spines) on the underside instead of gills or pores — this is the key ID feature. Mild nutty flavor. Firm white flesh.

Habitat:

Mixed woods along the AT corridor. Often found in the same spots as chanterelles.

Look-alike Warning:

■ One of the safest edible mushrooms to identify — no dangerous look-alikes have teeth (spines) on the underside.



7. Giant Puffball *Calvatia gigantea*

Peak: July – October

ID Features:

Large white ball, no cap or stem visible. Pure white solid interior when cut open. Can be baseball to basketball size. Smooth white exterior.

Habitat:

Open areas, meadows, trail edges, clearings along the AT.

Look-alike Warning:

■ CRITICAL: Always cut open before eating. Interior must be pure white and solid throughout. Young Amanita (deadly) can look like small white puffballs from outside — if you see ANY sign of a mushroom outline inside (cap, gills, stem shape), DO NOT EAT.

■ TOXIC SPECIES — DO NOT EAT

These species are dangerous or deadly. Learn to recognize them to avoid accidental ingestion. If any mushroom is ingested and you are uncertain, call 1-800-222-1222 immediately.



1. Death Cap *Amanita phalloides*

■ **DANGER: DEADLY** — responsible for most fatal mushroom poisonings worldwide

ID Features:

Pale green to yellow-green cap. White gills. White stem with a ring (skirt). Cup-like volva at base, often partially buried. Unpleasant smell when mature.

Habitat:

Mixed hardwood forests, near oaks. Present in Hudson Valley.

Look-alike Warning:

Can resemble edible *Amanita* species or young puffballs. NEVER eat any white-gilled mushroom with a cup (volva) at the base.

Symptoms:

Delayed 6–24 hours — nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, then apparent recovery, then organ failure. Call Poison Control IMMEDIATELY.



2. Destroying Angel *Amanita bisporigera*

■ **DANGER: DEADLY**

ID Features:

Pure white throughout — cap, gills, stem, ring, and volva. Elegant and deceptively beautiful. Free gills (not attached to stem).

Habitat:

Mixed woods, near oaks and conifers along the AT.

Look-alike Warning:

White button mushrooms — NEVER pick pure white mushrooms from the ground in the wild. Check for volva (cup) at base.

Symptoms:

Same as Death Cap — delayed, severe, often fatal without treatment. Call Poison Control immediately.



3. Jack-o-Lantern *Omphalotus olearius / illudens*

■ **DANGER: Toxic** — causes severe gastrointestinal distress

ID Features:

Bright orange. Grows in clusters at tree base or from buried roots. TRUE gills (blade-like, not forked ridges). Gills may glow faintly in complete darkness.

Habitat:

Base of oaks and other hardwoods along the AT. Grows from wood or buried roots — not singly from soil.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Chanterelle (edible) — KEY difference: Chanterelles have forked ridges (not true gills), grow singly from soil, not in clusters at tree base.

Symptoms:

Severe vomiting, cramps, diarrhea within hours. Not fatal but extremely unpleasant.



4. False Chanterelle / Deadly Webcap *Cortinarius rubellus* / *C. orellanus*

■ **DANGER: DEADLY** — causes delayed kidney failure

ID Features:

Orange-brown cap, true gills, rusty brown spore print. Cobweb-like veil (cortina) on young specimens. Lacks the fruity smell of chanterelles.

Habitat:

Mixed conifer and hardwood forests.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Golden Chanterelle — check for TRUE gills vs forked ridges. Always take a spore print (Cortinarius = rusty brown; Chanterelle = pale/white).

Symptoms:

CRITICAL: Symptoms delayed 2–3 weeks. Kidney failure. Call Poison Control if any suspected ingestion.



5. Deadly Galerina *Galerina marginata*

■ **DANGER: DEADLY**

ID Features:

Small brown mushroom. Ring on stem. Grows on dead wood. Brown spore print. Small cap, typically 1–4 cm.

Habitat:

Dead logs and stumps — same habitat as Oyster mushrooms.

Look-alike Warning:

■ Oyster mushrooms (edible) and other wood-growing species. Galerina is much smaller than oysters. Always take a spore print (Galerina = brown; Oyster = white/lilac).

Symptoms:

Contains same amatoxins as Death Cap. Liver failure. Call Poison Control immediately.

6. Amanita virosa *Amanita virosa* (Destroying Angel variant)

■ **DANGER: DEADLY**

ID Features:

All white — cap, gills, stem, ring, and volva. Gills free from stem. Cup (volva) at base. Ring on upper stem.

Habitat:

Mixed hardwood forests along the trail.

Look-alike Warning:

■ **RULE:** Never eat a wild white mushroom with free gills and a cup at the base. No exceptions.

Symptoms:

Liver and kidney failure. Call Poison Control immediately.

"When in doubt, throw it out."

 **POISON CONTROL 1-800-222-1222**

■ ***Sprout & Scout — Know Before You Pick*** ■

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This guide is for educational purposes only. Spore & Scout is not responsible for any illness resulting from foraging decisions. Always consult a certified mycologist before consuming any wild mushroom. Mushroom identification requires training and experience — this guide is a supplement to, not a replacement for, expert guidance.

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