

BLUE SKY FUNGI SHIITAKE MUSHROOM BLOCK

Special Note: PLEASE READ ALL of the instructions, gather all necessary materials and prepare your growing area BEFORE OPENING your new shiitake mushroom block. The Shiitake mycelium (the fungi that forms the mushroom) will have a white and brown bark/skin on the block. Before you begin, make sure that the mycelium block was not cracked or broken apart within the bag. If the block is cracked, place the sealed bag in a dark place and don't move it around. This allows the mycelium to recover and regrow for a few days undisturbed. If it starts growing mushrooms, it is ready.

Use only non-chlorinated water to rinse the block with. Well water or rainwater is great but if you are using tap water, you can leave an open container of water out overnight to breathe out or off gas the chlorine.

Always make sure your hands are clean before handling your shiitake block.

This block is made of oak sawdust and wood chips, supplemented with wheat bran and has been colonized by Shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*) mycelium.

Placement Indoors: Find a place inside that is of average room temperature (60°F - 70°F), has indirect lighting (enough to read words on a page, but not in direct sunlight), away from drafty air currents, fans, heat sources, and materials that are porous such as unsealed wood or carpet (spores drop from the mushroom). A more humid place like a basement or bathroom is better than a very dry place. If conditions in your preferred growing area are dry, you can use a plastic bag with air holes cut out, placed over the top of the block, a.k.a. a humidity tent.

Setting up and Initiating Fruiting:

If small mushrooms are already forming and pressing up against the bag, the fruiting block bag is ready to be opened following the steps below. A cold shock can stimulate mushroom formation (pinning) with the Shiitake mycelium if the block does not have observable mushrooms. You can do this by placing the sealed bag outside on a cold night (below 55°F and above freezing) for about 8 to 12 hours. Temperatures below freezing can kill the mycelium. You can also place the sealed bag in the refrigerator for that time. After the cold shock or observable pinning, prepare the space where you would like your Shiitake to live and follow these steps:

- Cut and pull off the plastic bag, removing the Shiitake block. It is OK if pieces of the mycelium break off within the bottom corners of the gusseted bag folds. And if a mushroom grew large and deformed up against the bag, you may cut that off when you start.
- Run cold water over the entire block for 10 - 15 seconds.
- Place the block over a bowl, a broiler pan, a wire rack, or pie pan. The ideal placement is to span the block over the container edges so as little of the bottom is touching a surface. This way you can have moisture pool at the bottom and the shiitake block is not sitting in water. If the block is sitting in standing water or the entire bottom is contacting a flat surface, it will become slimy and this can cause bacteria to grow- which is not ideal and will shorten the life span and productivity of your shiitake block.
- Place the block and the container in a proper location (see above). You can place the block outside if the correct conditions are present, but you open the mushrooms up to bugs and other potential problems, so indoors and climate-controlled areas are best.

Daily Care:

Now that your mushroom fruiting block is set up, you need to perform some daily care, Everyday :

- Rinse the block with cold water at least once a day. Remember to empty the drip water in the bottom of the container, if there is, when you rinse off the block.
- Once the mushrooms get bigger, the block gets more difficult to move, and you can use a spray bottle to keep the mycelium block surface moist. When using a spray bottle, mist the block surface and the inside of the humidity tent thoroughly. You don't need to spray the mushrooms.

Harvesting:

Mushrooms should start to form in 4-7 days after opening. If you notice a lot of pinning (mushrooms forming) on the underside early on in the growth, you may flip the block over so the pins are growing on the top now. Continue to water the block while the shiitake are growing and try to avoid getting a lot of water on the underside (gills) of the mushrooms. Ideal harvest time is when the cap starts to pull away from the stem to expose the gills. Younger mushrooms are dense and will have a better shelf-life. You can let the mushrooms grow bigger, but be aware that once the gills are exposed, the mushroom will be dropping spores and thinning out. You may stop watering the block a day or two before you harvest to let the caps dry out a bit. Ideally harvest them all at once, but you can wait 1 or 2 days if you don't want all of them at once or want some to grow bigger. Be sure to cut the stems all the way to the surface of the block when harvesting, this prevents bacteria from growing on the stem butt.

More Mushrooms!

Shiitake will produce several flushes of mushrooms, but you will need to rest the mycelium in between each round to let it build up energy for the next flush. During this time, the mycelium is decomposing (eating) more of the wood for nutrients. Let the block rest in a dry area with good ventilation for 7 to 10 days.

Do not water the block during the rest time!!! And do not leave the humidity tent on.

After 7-10 days, you are now ready to re-initiate the block for another flush of mushrooms! Soak the block in a bucket of cold, chlorine-free water overnight (approx. 8- 12 hours).

The block will want to float, so you will need to put something on top of the block to submerge it or use a lid on the bucket. After soaking, remove the block from the water and place it back in the mushroom fruiting location and resume the daily care of rinsing. You can expect at least 2 flushes of mushrooms from these blocks. Some have gotten as many as 5 flushes! Generally, you should get about 2 to 3 pounds of shiitake over the total lifespan of the block, when conditions are ideal. If no more mushrooms form after soaking, you can try to rest it and soak it again. If soaking again yields no pinning, then the block is exhausted. And if surface molds or bacteria (green, black, or yellow) start to grow on the block, you can treat the spots with hydrogen peroxide and scrape them off. If the block gets overrun by mold/bacteria you should move it outside of your home. It is now excellent mulch, wonderful food for your worm farm or compost for your garden ... or a yard ornament that may give you surprise mushrooms later!

Ideal conditions for Shiitake mushrooms:

Temperature: 50°F - 85°F ; Humidity: 60% - 85%

Contact Matt or Nicole at blueskyfungi@gmail.com with any questions and include a photo if possible.

Post photos of your success and tag us on Instagram @Blueskyfungi . Thank you and enjoy!