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The fungus among us

Mushrooms to provide new food, income source for area farmers

Taking something that could be seen as waste and turning it into something you can eat was the focus of a recent demonstration for Red Bird Mission's Grow Appalachia.

Will Bowling, extension agent for Clay County, was at Red Bird Mission inoculating logs with mushroom spores otherwise known as spawn.

"The cool thing is you don't have to have real good timber. As a matter of fact, if you do have a nice pretty tree, that's not what you want to use for mushrooms," he said. "It's a good thing if you have some woods and want to do some

forest management and cut some trees out."

The popularity of the workshop and the crop could make this event an annual one, said Michelle Collett, Grow Appalachia program director.

"One of the reasons I brought this in is for economic opportunity," she said.

What Bowling used for his demonstration was the tops of trees left over after a lumber company had cut some trees.

He drilled multiple holes into the logs, used a special tool to insert spawn into the holes,



and then dabbed wax over the hole to protect the spawn.

"We do these holes in a pattern with the grain of the wood to try to up our chances of infecting this log," Bowling said.

"It's a shock-and-awe approach because there may have been some other fungus in it, so we're trying to overwhelm it with our spawn."

Twenty people attended the workshop and took home logs infected with either shitake or

oyster mushrooms. Properly stored logs should produce oyster mushrooms in the late fall and shitakes this time next year.

Leaning the log at a 45-degree angle in a damp, shady area, making sure one end has contact with the ground, is ideal.

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