

giant puffball *Calvatia gigantea*

Kingdom: Fungi

Division/Phylum: Basidiomycota

Class: Agaricomycetes

Order: Agaricales

Family: Agaricaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The body of a fungus (mycelium) is made up of strands called mycelia. The mycelium grows within the soil, a dead tree or other object and is rarely seen. The fruiting body that produces spores is generally present for only a short period of time but is the most familiar part of the fungus to people. The giant puffball has a white spore case contained in a thin, outer layer that flakes off when maturity is attained. The outer layer is white to white-brown. The spores are yellow to green-brown. The giant puffball may be nearly 20 inches wide and is one of the largest puffballs.

BEHAVIORS

The giant puffball may be found in grassy areas statewide. It grows singly or in a scattered arrangement. Unlike plants, fungi do not have roots, stems, leaves, flowers or seeds. The giant puffball must absorb nutrients and water from the objects it grows in. Spores are produced from late summer through fall. The spores provide a means of reproduction, dispersal and survival in poor conditions. Spore production occurs when conditions are favorable, generally with warm temperatures and ample moisture.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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