



Some guidelines for our fungi walks.

What happens at one of our fungi walks?

We generally meet up at 10.00, and whilst people are assembling we look at and chat about any fungi collected from elsewhere (so please bring along any finds that you'd like to share or to be identified). Then after a brief welcome and introduction to the site from the leader, we head off. Pace is slow and everyone searches and collects. The leader keeps a list of all species found (though many will need to be taken home for further work on identification), so everything you find needs to be shown to the leader as we proceed, consequently there is much pausing and much valuable information shared during the walk. For this reason (also to ensure you don't get lost!) it is advisable though not obligatory to stay within earshot of the leader who will always be willing to help and instruct.

Weather and cancellation.

We don't restrict our walks to fine weather but may occasionally call off an event when for example really bad weather is likely to cause danger from falling branches, the ground is snow-covered or frosty, or forestry work or similar restricts our access. If in doubt, to be on the safe side it is advisable to phone the leader prior to leaving home – this might save you a wasted journey.

What to wear?

Come dressed for woodland rambling: stout shoes, walking boots or wellies are advised, also warm waterproof clothing if rain threatens – it goes without saying that weather is often changeable. We do not necessarily stay on paths or rides.

What to bring?

A small flattish basket is useful, with a few plastic pots of various sizes for collecting into (margarine tubs are good); plastic bags or carriers are *not* recommended. Participants often take a small handlens (x10 magnification) for examining tiny specimens, also a small penknife or trowel is handy for digging up specimens without damaging them. Most walks are mornings only, so carry with you only whatever refreshment you require for that time. A camera, notebook and pencil, also a handguide, can be useful too. (All the above equipment is optional, however.)

Children and dogs?

Family members' children are more than welcome and are often a great asset with their inquisitive minds and sharp eyesight. Dogs are also permitted at the vast majority of our venues if under control, though one or two sites are exceptions; please check on our programme where we will alert you if dogs are not allowed.

Personal safety.

The Group has insurance through its affiliation with the British Mycological Society, but please bear in mind that **YOU are responsible for your own safety and also that of any children, dogs or equipment you bring with you.** The following points should be noted:

- Follow the country code, closing gates, styles etc behind you, and causing minimal damage to vegetation, leaf litter, soil and other features. We may be visiting private property, and the owner (who will have granted us permission) and his land should be respected.
- Take care when moving 'off piste': brambles, overhanging branches, potholes, slippery and hilly terrain, barbed-wire fences, streams and ditches etc can cause accidents.
- If you might wander off on your own and get lost, don't count on there being a mobile phone signal in woodland areas: a whistle or compass could be a safeguard.
- A few quite common fungi are extremely poisonous; however, the toxins are not absorbed in sufficient quantities through the skin to warrant danger from handling. Gloves are *not* recommended for protection. However, those with a particular sensitivity to allergens or infection should seek independent advice before touching fungi. It is obviously good practice to wash your hands after handling fungi, also to be very careful to avoid any poisonous fungi becoming mixed up with anything likely to be eaten.

General collecting.

Try to avoid repetitive picking: i.e. once a particular species has been identified and listed, leave further collections in situ for everyone to enjoy. When picking, take care to collect the whole fruitbody right down to its base; take just one or two specimens - if possible at different stages of development, and make a note of the substrate and tree/plant association.

Collecting for the pot.

The Group's main function is to identify and record with the aim of increasing our knowledge of fungi and of spreading the word to a wider public. Collecting to eat is of minor importance but is permitted in moderation on some (*but not all*) of our venues. Experienced members will always be ready to give help and advice on recognising edible species, but even the country's top experts have been known to make mistakes when identifying in the field. Ultimately, what you choose to consume is always entirely your own responsibility.