

What is the spawn disc method?

The spawn disc method is a way to inoculate green logs with mushroom-producing fungi. It is essentially a modified version of the totem method allowing for use on logs of various lengths.

This method does not require the use of power tools to drill holes or the use of wax like the drill and fill method needs. It is as simple as making a disc using sawdust spawn and placing them on the end of a green log using heavy duty foil.

Why use the spawn disc method?

- Inoculate larger quantities of logs in shorter periods of time
- Forgoes use of power tools and burners for pots of wax
- Keeps bark of log intact helping to resist natural fungi invaders
- Colonizes heartwood faster

Are there any drawbacks to the spawn disc method?

- Time from inoculation to fruiting time can be a longer period than using the drill and fill method
- Not all varieties show good results using the spawn disc method
 - Reishi, enoki, maitake, king oysters, and chicken of the woods are harder to produce using this method

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How to make spawn discs

Materials required

- Block of spawn
- Embroidery rings of various sizes for disc templates
- Heavy duty foil sheets
- Plastic container with lid or plastic bag for storage
- Patience

Process

- Wash hand thoroughly with soap and water
- Start by breaking up spawn either using hands or food processor, preferably with dough blade
- Place a handful of desired spawn into embroidery ring template, 1/4" thickness is perfect (see fig. A)
- Sizes of cakes should be made according to diameter of potential logs. 8", 6", 5", & 4" are what we commonly use
- Stack cakes in desired stacks, we typically stack 10 cakes, one on top of the other, so we know we have 5 logs worth in each stack
- Top final cake with cover sheet of foil and fold edges over to lock in moisture
- Wait ~2 weeks for colonization to take place (see fig. B on back)
- Place discs on the end of fresh cut logs of appropriate size molding foil tightly to the log
- Leave foil in place for at least 3 months while cake "knits" to the end of the log

How long does it take the logs to produce mushrooms?

In general it takes about 8-12 months for logs inoculated using the spawn disc method to fruit mushrooms

- Oyster, lions mane and chestnut mushrooms are fastest producing and usually produce within a year
- Shiitake mushrooms have a longer inoculation period that can be anywhere from 12-24 months
- Time to produce fruit depends on proper conditions such as moisture levels, type of wood used and intended variety of mushroom

What type of trees do I use and when do I cut them?

Most hardwoods (typically deciduous trees) will suffice for the production of saprophytic fungi but there are a few considerations to keep in mind

- You can inoculate the logs the day you cut them down, no need to wait as many resources suggest
- Avoid using cut logs older than six weeks
- Some varieties produce better on specific woods such as
 - shiitake goes best with oak
 - oysters go best with maple/gum and produce very sparsely on oak



What time of the year do I inoculate?

The best time of the year to inoculate is when the trees are dormant. For us in Virginia, this typically runs from November-March. This is also a time where insect activity is at a minimum and insects sure do love to eat the spawn discs. You can inoculate all year round but it is not recommended.

Where do I place my inoculated logs at?

There are a few things to keep in mind when placing your logs

- Avoid placing in areas that receive continual, direct sunlight as this will dry out the log and potential fruit as well
- Place somewhere that receives access to rainfall. In other words, do not cover with impermeable surfaces
- The more shade the better
- Areas such as under dense tree canopies, tucked in shrubs, or the north side of buildings work well
- Avoid placing too close to buildings to minimize insect attractants



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Examples of spawn disc progress



Fig. A: Freshly made spawn disc showing little mycelial growth



Fig. B: Well colonized spawn disc after a 2-3 weeks of growth. When the disc have this appearance they are ready for use on fresh cut logs

Forest Mushroom Growers Association



Logs inoculated using the spawn disc method

Because we care

Mushroom Guide - Spawn Disc Edition

A brief resource to better your understanding of the spawn disc inoculation method

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Mathews, Virginia