

# Laboratory – Fungi

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Fungi are generally classified as absorptive heterotrophs. Approximately 100,000 species have been placed into the basic taxa: Chytridiomycota, Glomeromycota, Zygomycota, Ascomycota, and Basidiomycota. This particular clade includes diverse organisms such as yeasts, mushrooms, toadstools, rusts and smuts as well as those that appear to live in symbiotic relationships with algae (lichens) and the roots of more than 80% of plants (endomycorrhizae and ectomycorrhizae). Using your photographic atlas examine the life cycles and examples of the major taxa.

## Objectives:

1. Differentiate between common members of the taxa.
2. List characteristics of the taxa.
3. Recognize and name some common members of the taxa.
4. Discuss life cycles of the taxa.
5. Discuss economic significance of the taxa.
6. Discuss distinguishing characteristics of a fungus.
7. Discuss the economic significance of fungi.
8. Discuss their significance as plant and animal pathogens.
9. Differentiate between foliose, fruticose and crustose forms of lichens.

## Fungi

Fungi are ubiquitous eukaryotes, generally multicellular, exhibiting rapid growth. They are absorptive heterotrophs releasing digestive hydrolytic enzymes that are secreted on or into sources of nutrition.

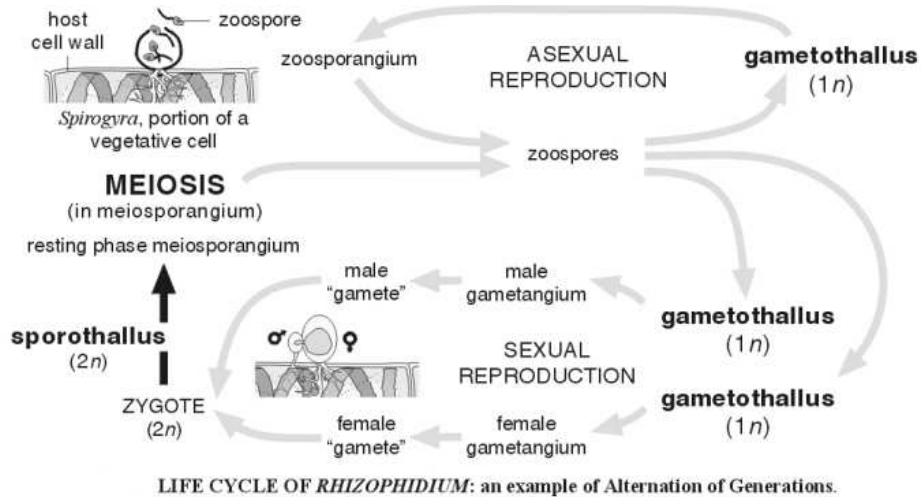
Nutritional modes include those that function as saprobes (absorb nutrients from non-living sources), parasites (absorb nutrients from living tissues - smuts, plant molds, mycoplasmas in human lungs), and mutualistic symbionts (fungi may absorb nutrients from a living source but they also provide support, water or minerals to other organisms.)

The basic structure consists of hyphae (minute tubes of chitin), most have septa with pores, some are aseptate and coenocytic, mycelium (the feeding network of hyphae which can be extensive) and haustoria (nutrient absorbing hyphal tips found in some pathogens.)

All fungi reproduce asexually and some reproduce sexually when times are tough. Plasmogamy (fusion of the cells) precedes karyogamy (fusion of nuclei.) Dikaryon forms may exist for long periods of time. During mitosis the nuclear envelope remains intact and pinches in two after anaphase.

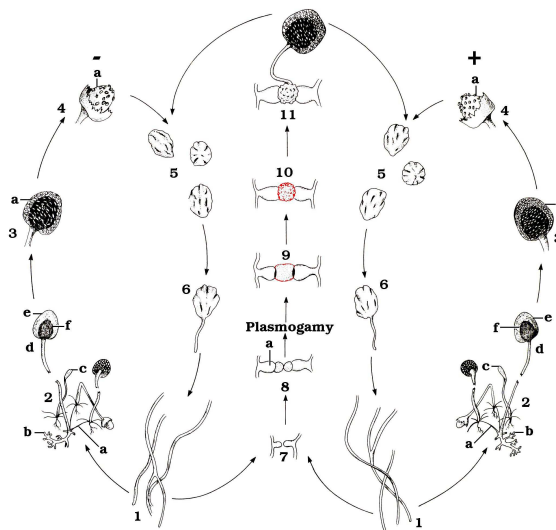
Members of the division Chytridiomycota were once classed as protists based on the fact that they have flagellated zoospores. Recent molecular data from protein and nucleic acid analyses indicate that chytrids are true fungi. Consequently, they have been moved from being protists and are now considered fungi. They are thought to be the link between protists and fungi. They are aquatic fungi which play an important role in decomposition as saprobes or as parasites of plants

and invertebrates. Parasitic chytrids have been implicated in the world-wide decline of amphibians.



Division Zygomycota includes 600 varieties. It is largely terrestrial and coenocytic with zygosporangia formed during sexual reproduction. Asexual reproduction occurs via sporangia yielding haploid spores which air currents disseminate. *Rhizopus* is a common bread mold.

### RHIZOPUS LIFE CYCLE

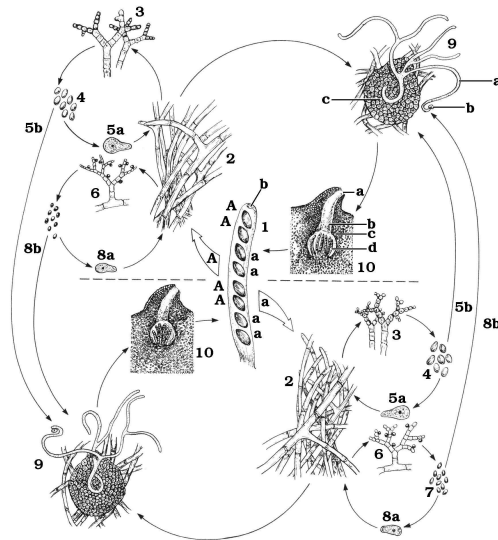


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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hyphae (coenocytic)</li> <li>2. Colony             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stolion</li> <li>b. Rhizoid</li> <li>c. Young sporangium</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Mature sporangium             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Spore</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Dehisced sporangium             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Columella</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Spore (aplanspore)</li> <li>6. Germinating spore</li> <li>7. Progametangia</li> <li>8. Gametangia             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Suspensor</li> </ul> </li> <li>9. Zygote</li> <li>10. Zygospore</li> <li>11. Sporangium</li> </ol> |
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Division Ascomycota contains approximately 60,000 species of sac fungi, leaf fungus, yeasts, truffles and many plant pathogens. . Truffles and morels (both ascomycetes) live in symbiotic relationships with plants.

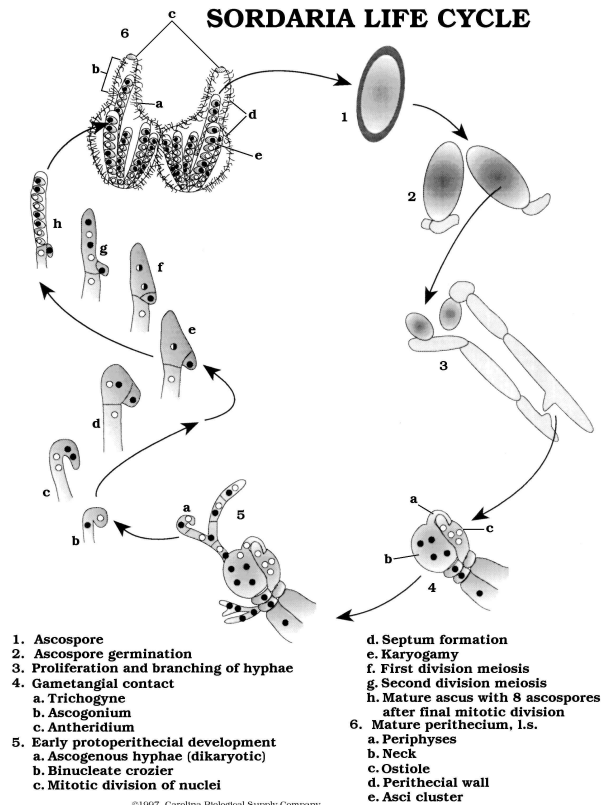
### NEUROSPORA LIFE CYCLE



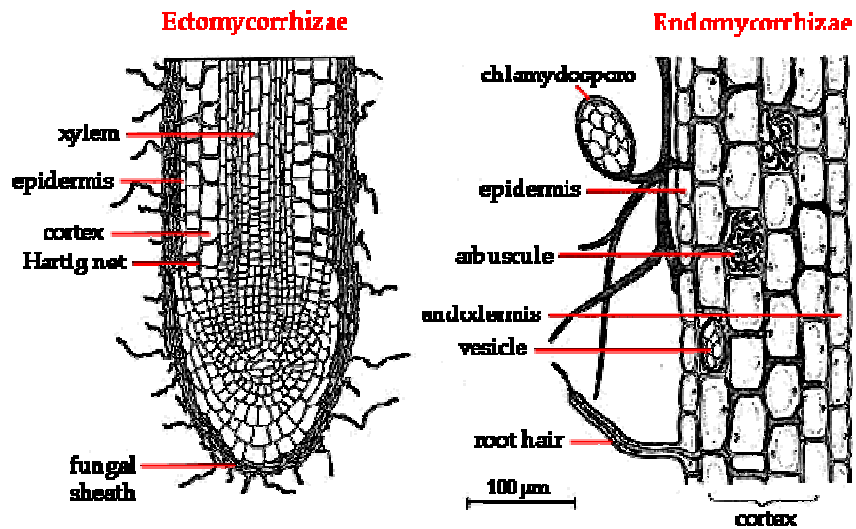
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| <p>1. Ascus<br/>a. and A. Ascospores<br/>b. Ascilar pore</p> <p>2. Somatic hyphae</p> <p>3. Macroconidiophore</p> <p>4. Macroconidia</p> <p>5a. Germination</p> | <p>5b. Conidiation</p> <p>6. Microconidiophore</p> <p>7. Microconidia</p> <p>8a. Germination</p> <p>8b. Spermatization</p> <p>9. Protoperithecium<br/>a. Trichogyne</p> | <p>b. Macro- or microconidium</p> <p>c. Ascogonium</p> <p>10. Young asci in perithecium<br/>a. Ostiolar canal<br/>b. Ostiolar canal<br/>c. Peridium<br/>d. Ascus</p> |
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Asci are saclike structures containing ascospores found on the ascocarp (the macroscopic fruiting body.) Asci form at the tips of hyphae, karyogamy combines the two genomes meiosis follows, often yielding 8 ascospores. *Sordaria* is often studied as a representative of Ascomycota. Conidia (asexual structures) are often produced at the ends of hyphae in chains or clusters. It is often found on dung.

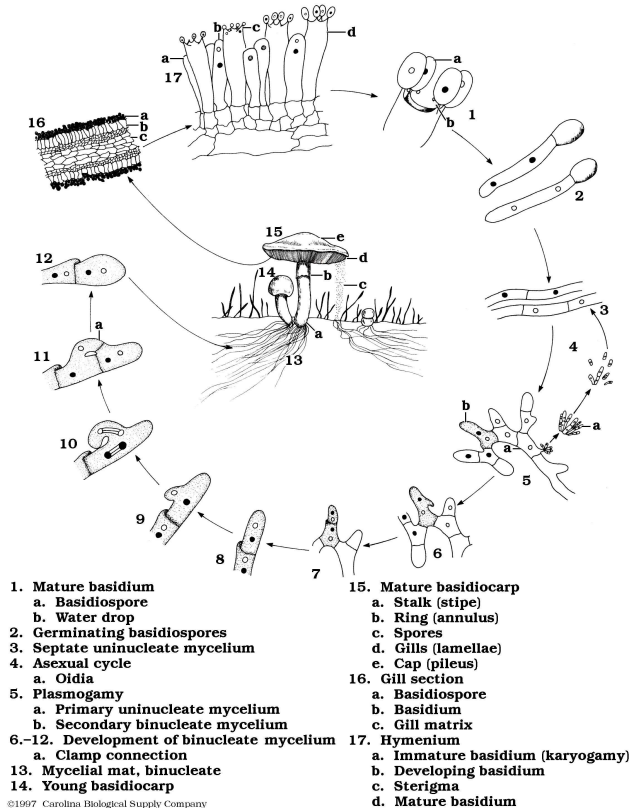


The clade Glomeromycota includes mycorrhizae. Mycorrhizae are produced by fungi that live as symbionts with plants exchanging nutrients. Ectomycorrhizae penetrate the space between root cells but do not penetrate the cell membrane of the plant that they are associated with. Endomycorrhizae penetrate the space between the cell walls and plasma membranes of the plant root. Some fungi protect plants from insects by releasing toxins. Mycorrhizae are found associated with more than 80% of all plants.



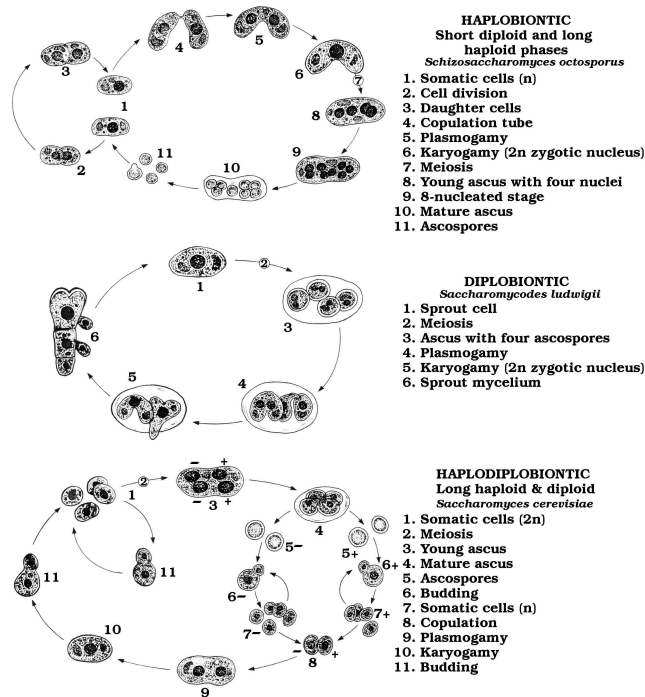
Basidiomycota includes 25,000 species. The basidium (clublike shape) is the diploid stage in the life cycle. These fungi are experts at decomposing lignin. Saprobies, mycorrhiza-forming mutualists and plant parasites (shelf fungi, rusts, and smuts) are found in this division. The dikaryon stage may be long-lived. Sexual reproduction produces a fruiting body (basidiocarp), the source of sexual spores. Gills may have surface area of 200 cm<sup>2</sup>. Asexual reproduction is less common, spores produced as conidia.

### GILL FUNGUS LIFE CYCLE



Yeasts are unicellular fungi that live in moist habitats, plant and animal tissues. Some yeasts reproduce sexually and are classified as ascomycetes or basidiomycetes. The balance reproduce asexually and are classified as fungi imperfecti. *Saccharomyces cerevisia*, an ascomycete, is used in baking and alcohol production.

## YEAST LIFE CYCLES

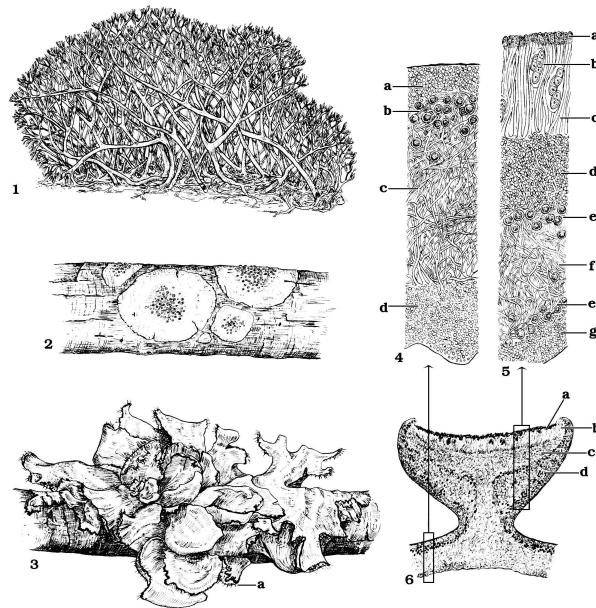


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Lichens are symbiotic associations of photosynthetic microorganisms (cyanobacteria and chlorophyta) tangled in a mesh of fungal hyphae. Algae provide food to fungi while the fungi provide support and minerals.

Lichens reproduce by soredia (small clusters containing fungal hyphae and algal cells.) Lichens are often the pioneers in an environment and are very intolerant of pollution and used to predict pollution.

## LICHEN TYPES



1. Fruticose lichen
2. Crustose lichen
3. Foliose lichen
  - a. Rhizines
4. Foliose lichen, c.s.
  - a. Upper cortex
  - b. Algal layer

- c. Medulla
- d. Lower cortex
5. Apothecium, vertical c.s.
  - a. Epithecium
  - b. Ascus
  - c. Hymenium
  - d. Hypothecium
  - e. Algal layer

- f. Medullary hyphae
- g. Upper cortical hyphae
6. Stalked apothecium, l.s.
  - a. Hymenium
  - b. Proper exciple
  - c. Hypothecium
  - d. Thalloid exciple

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Of the approximately 100,000 known species of fungi, about one-third of these are mutualists, as either lichens or mycorrhizae. About another third are decomposers living in the soil and rotting organic matter. The rest are parasitic, mostly in or on plants. Sometimes a fungus can cause major changes to the landscape. An example of this is the fungus that causes Dutch Elm disease that continues to destroy American elms in the landscape following accidental release from logs imported from Europe after World War I.

Agriculturally, fungi are a serious pest. Species called smuts and rusts cause tremendous crop losses every year. One group of fungi, known as ergots, can cause serious medical problems including gangrene, nervous spasms, burning sensations, hallucinations, temporary insanity, and death. Ergots infect poorly stored cereal grains (mainly rye, wheat and oats) and produce several kinds of toxins, including lysergic acid which is the precursor for LSD. In 944 an ergot outbreak killed 40,000 people in Europe and an ergot infestation in barley is now thought to have triggered the events that led to the Salem witch trials. Some of the ergot compounds, however, have medicinal value in small doses, one such compound being used for treating blood pressure. Two species of *Aspergillus* (*Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*) produce toxins (known as aflatoxins) that have been found in milk, cheese, corn, peanuts, cottonseed, nuts, almonds, figs, spices, and a variety of other foods and feeds, with corn, peanuts, and cottonseed being the most common source (milk, eggs and meat probably become contaminated through animal consumption). These toxins are some of the most toxic naturally occurring substances and are tightly regulated in foods. They cannot be present at levels above 20 ng/g (0.5 ng/g for milk) and

produce symptoms which include vomiting, abdominal pain, pulmonary edema, convulsions, coma, and death.

Animals are less susceptible to parasitic fungal infections. About 50 species of fungus parasitize humans and other animals. Human fungal infections include yeast infections of the lungs (*Aspergillus* species), and vagina and bucal cavity (*Candida*), and *Tinea* infections of the scalp, skin and feet (ringworm and athlete's foot). In recent times, two toxic molds have been the focus of considerable attention. *Stachybotrys chartarum* and *S. atra* have made homes, schools and commercial buildings uninhabitable – the so-called sick building syndrome. Laws have recently been passed to protect consumers from poor home construction and/or repair that result in moisture problems in cellulose-containing areas of the structure (which promotes mold growth).

Some scientists wish to include another clade, Microsporidia. In this group we find some parasites that inhabit animal cells. They are very small (1-4 u) and are linked to the decline of the Honey Bee.

Economically, fungi are extremely important as we depend on them as decomposers and recyclers of organic matter. Fungi also have a number of practical uses for humans. Mushrooms are widely eaten as food but fungi also provide the distinctive flavors of a number of cheeses, including Roquefort and blue cheese, which are ripened by fungi. Truffles, the fruiting bodies of mycorrhizal fungi of oak trees in Western Europe are highly prized. A species of *Aspergillus* is used in the production of soy sauce. Yeasts, which are unicellular fungi, are used for baking, brewing, and winemaking. Some fungi are important because they produce antibiotics. The first antibiotic discovered, penicillin, is the product of the *Penicillium* mold. *Tolypocladium inflatum* yields cyclosporine, a drug that prevents rejection following organ transplant.

Important fungi: *Rhodotorula* (appears as a pink scum on shower curtains), *Candida* (a common cause of vaginitis), *Clavicipes purpurea* (source of the precursor for LSD), *Pilobolus*, *Amanita bisporigera* (the death angel fungus which produces a powerful hallucinogenic toxin), *Penicillium notatum* (antibiotic discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1927), *Aspergillus* (aflatoxin), *Agaricus* (edible mushroom.)

Significance includes roles as decomposers, spoilers, pathogens, edible good and producers of antibiotics.

## Laboratory Questions:

1. Name the 5 main taxa and give characteristics of each.



2. Describe the life cycles characteristic of the taxa.

3. Discuss distinguishing characteristics of fungi.

4. Discuss both positive and negative impacts of fungi.

5. Research an economically significant fungus and printout at least one report from a reliable journal about this fungus. Write a one paragraph synopsis of the report and be prepared to present this to the class in lab.

6. Draw representatives of each type of lichen.