

Edible Lichens



Deserve to be mentioned

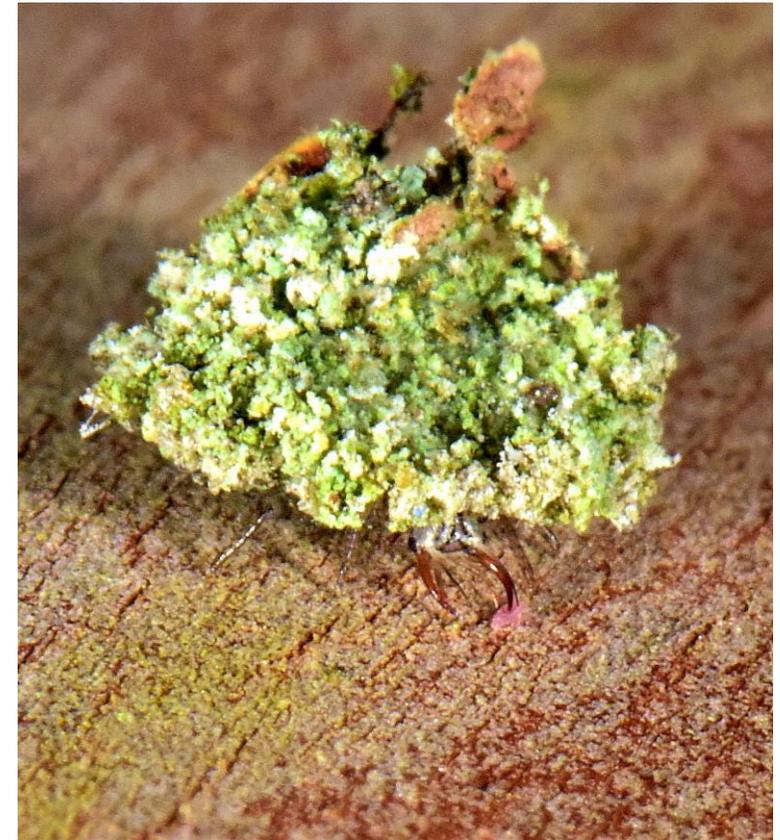
Grow on logs, bark, stones (not moss)

For years they were assumed to be plants

Then discovered to be fungi growing synergistically with microscopic algae

Algae use the sun to make nutrients for the fungus

The fungus provide minerals, water and shelter for the algae



Lichens so far cannot be grown in a lab

Attempts to bring algae and fungi together do not survive

Recently discovered that lichens are three organisms

Algae and two different fungi – all synergistic

The relationship between the two fungi is not understood

But the amount of one that contains vulpinic acid
(poisonous) determines if edible



May be edible but not necessarily tasty

They can have a strong acid taste or bitter or may be bland

Need to be thoroughly washed as they can contain trapped dirt and bugs

Needed to be soaked several times

More they're soaked and boiled, the more palatable they become

Chinese boiled for 30 minutes, soaked for 2 days with several changes of water and then boiled again



Sometime soaked with baking soda

Sometimes soaked with hardwood ashes

After soaking – water is discarded

Can be eaten plain, dried, added to flour and used as thickener

[Lichen recipes](#)

The question is why would anyone want to eat them?



Medicinal Lichens

Usnea is found in several lichen species – is antibiotic and anti-inflammatory

Many help with some types of cancer but it may also be harmful to the liver (animal studies)

May also help with gastric and intestinal disorders

Reindeer moss, oak moss and Iceland moss are all edible



Lichens are often used in textiles, food additives and topical products

Also consider good for the environment and have cleansing properties like mushrooms

Not a lot of research about benefits

Most is based on traditional medicine

Must be careful if trying – make sure it's edible and research how to use

