

Bush Fungus Stove

Birch tinder fungus. I have used this type of fungus for many applications that I call "options." If you have white birch or yellow birch in your area, it should be fairly easy to find. However, your topography might not have birch trees, so try to find something else of the same texture, and characteristics that will accomplish this task. This is where the learning curve comes in. Get outdoors, venture around in your area, and look for "options" as I have.



Photo 2
When you harvest this birch fungus, it will appear as you see it in **Photo 2**. It shows the side that will face the tree, the inner fungus side.



Photo 3
Photo 3 shows the side that you will see when you are walking through the bush. It will have a distinct black appearance that you will not be able to mistake for something else. This blackness will be very coarse. I have found many different types of this fungus. Where they are harvested does make a difference.



Photo 4
Pictured in **Photo 4** is a yellow birch tree where I harvested this piece of fungus. Remember, when you remove such a big piece from the tree, it is always a good idea to collect some sap and fill in the wound. If you take something from the earth, try to add back to the resource.



Photo 5
Now that I had found the fungus that I needed, I crouched down behind a beaver bank that would shelter me from the north wind. As luck would have it it started to rain just as I was starting to get things going. If you notice my pants leg in **Photo 5**, you can see the water starting to absorb into my clothing. The setting for this experiment was a good trial for my bush fungus stove -- it would either work or fail!



Photo 6



Photo 7

In **Photo 6**, you can see my preferred method of fire starting for this particular day. I call it my "knife and stone" fire starting method." I used my knife, and in this case, a piece of flint that I had with me. I struck the flint with the back edge of my knife against the stone to create a spark.



Photo 8
I continued to assist it until I felt it was ready to transfer it to the fungus. **Photo 8**.

Once the spark was caught in the tinder, **Photo 7**,
Tip: I always like to prepare the fungus before I place the coal into it. Dig a small hole the size of the tinder, and use a knife to break it up. This allows the tinder to transfer its heat rather quickly from one source to another. Some fungi are better at accepting the tinder than others-some are damp, some are too dry, and some fungus pieces really need some coaxing to get the tinder to stay lit. It is not always an easy task.



Photo 9
Try to coax the tinder to catch in the fungus as soon as possible. Blowing on it will help to let it spread. Do not let just one part get a lot of heat, as it will burn down and not laterally. You are trying to allow it to burn more laterally; then, burn deeper. This way it will use the fungus more evenly, and burn longer as a whole piece. **Photo 9**. The piece shown in front of the fungus has not been coaxed to spread laterally. It will burn more slowly and deeper before it ever evens out. The back piece shows the evenness that you would like to accomplish. The upper piece in the photograph shows the evenness that you would like to accomplish.



Photo 10
Stirring up the fungus will also help to make it burn deeper as a whole. In other words, to spread it evenly. **Photo 10**. This will increase the temperature of your cooking pot considerably, distributing the heat against the surface. Be especially careful at this stage, because it does get hot.



Photo 11
Once it has started burning evenly it is time to place your pot on top of it. **Photo 11** gives you a good idea of the size of my fungus stove, as compared to my all-in-one pot. At this point, I used my knife to form a holder for my pot to sit on. It would be of no use to me to put a pot on a fungus stove only to have the water spill out of it and put the fire out.



Photo 12

Photo 12 shows how stable the pot will sit on the fungus stove. If the stove is left out in the open too long, it will burn down more quickly than if it is sheltered. If you are fortunate in making a fungus stove, try to get the most from it.



Photo 13

Photo 13 shows that the fungus stove has been burning for some time, as the pot is lower in the fungus. You can see that the heat has stayed within the walls of the fungus. This is good, because it will maintain a constant heat -- it will not burn down too fast. Even on a day that is not so perfect and with the moisture playing on the fungus, the walls will not saturate with water very easily. This allows for a longer burning time. This particular piece of fungus has been burning over an hour!