

Tinder Fungus

Tinder Fungus is a type of fungus that holds a coal very well for a long period of time, and ignites easily. Tinder Fungus grows on live birch trees and looks like a blotch of blackened wood. It is rather hard. It resembles black bark that has peeled away slightly from the tree and thickened. The part that you use is inside the blackened outer layer, the red-brown material. It crumbles readily, so you can use it as part of tinder when making fire (or in a fire piston), or keep it in a whole piece for carrying a coal.



Here is a nice big chunk of **Tinder Fungus** at the base of a live birch tree.



This picture shows the **Tinder Fungus** cut open to reveal the red-brown interior



Here's a small **Tinder Fungus** growing farther up a live birch tree.

Note how it looks like a chunk of thick, blackened, chunky bark.



Tinder Fungus sometimes grows on trees other than birch.

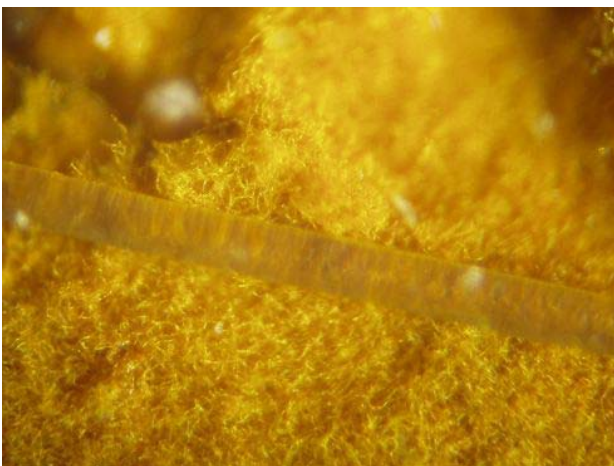
Here's a picture of it growing on a Hop Hornbeam tree (Ironwood).

Here's a larger one. The left picture is a closeup of the fungus. The right picture shows it growing on the birch tree.



This photo, taken through a microscope, shows a human hair overlaid on a piece of tinder fungus.

From the photo it is pretty clear why tinder fungus works so well!





Here are a couple pictures of the largest tinder fungus I ever came across.

The shape was like a volcano on its side. Sap was dripping through the "mouth" of the "volcano."



From observation, it seems that tinder fungus usually grows at some injury site on a tree. In the case of this huge example, it seems like there was a steady stream of sap - which was able to feed and grow a huge fungus.

While on the topic, there seems to be some debate as to how to prepare tinder fungus. I have read in places that it doesn't work very well when dried. My limited experience has shown that if the fungus is dried too quickly - then it is less effective. Drying in an oven turns out a particularly bad product. For this large fungus, I cut it up into pieces which were then placed into a pillow case. The pillow case was kept out of the sun, but did have a bit of airflow. The trick is to dry slowly, but not so slowly that molds start to appear. The dried fungus works very well.



Well, not exactly a primitive living picture! But it shows the two types of Tinder Fungus.

The **False Tinder Fungus** is the stripy one on the left, and there's a small one underneath it, and some more small ones to the rear. The **Tinder Funguses** are the red-brown chunks with black on one side.

Leaving stuff out like this is also a good reminder of primitive skills, Nature, the Earth, and the like. ...You come home from work, all stressed out from working in an office or on a machine all day, walk in, throw something together for supper, sit down to eat, and see the bowl of Tinder Fungus (or whatever). "Oh yeah, that's what's real, that's what it's all about".

Both of these fungi are fairly **aromatic** when burning, and are said to have medicinal properties. Tinder Fungus smells nicer than False Tinder Fungus.