

Fungal Portrait: 92

Mycetinis alliaceus

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Fig. 1. *Mycetinis alliaceus* in beech leaf litter, the Shere Estate, Surrey, October, 2022, showing their stiff, dark blackish brown minutely tomentose stems. Photograph © Mario Tortelli

The rather elegant, although drab *Mycetinis alliaceus* (Jacq.) Earle ex A.W. Wilson & Desjardin (Figs 1 & 2) is perhaps better known under its synonym *Marasmius alliaceus*. Despite its drabness it has a surprise in store: if you smell it (and you should smell all fungi you collect of which you are unsure) your nostrils will be assailed by the strong odour of garlic. There are a few other species of rather similar colour which also smell of garlic, e.g. *Gymnopus foetidus* (Fig. 3) and *G. brassicolens* (Fig. 4), but they are nowhere near as tall and usually grow in clusters on woody debris or fallen branches.

The genus *Mycetinis* Earle is an old one, created in 1909 with *M. alliaceus* as its type. This placement however was largely ignored, with

most books in the last 50 years, following Fries who placed it in *Marasmius*. Recent DNA studies however (e.g. Oliveira *et al.*, 2019) confirm its separation from *Marasmius* along with the other species in the section *Alliacei* (in Britain only the rare *M. scorodonius*).

Mycetinis alliaceus has rather large white spores which are amygdaliform in shape, 9.0–12 x 5.0–7.5 μm and its gill edges have cylindric cheilocystidia. The species is found exclusively in leaf litter of *Fagus* on calcareous soils but its distribution in Britain is rather interesting.

As pointed out in the British Checklist (Legon & Henrici, 2005) it is often referred to in older books as common and perhaps it was in those days but it certainly does not appear to be so today. Reports are widespread in England from

Yorkshire southwards but most are unsubstantiated with voucher material. The majority of recent records and collections have been from ancient woodlands in West Sussex. This collection was from the Shere estate in Surrey and the species is recorded from only one other site in Surrey at this time. It is hoped that this portrait will stimulate further discoveries of this species around the country, supported by photographs and voucher material.



Fig. 2. Another collection of *Mycetinis alliaceus* from the Shere Estate, backlit with the minute tomentose hairs on the stem showing as a white outline. Photo © Geoffrey Kibby.



Fig. 3. *Gymnopus foetidus*

With a velvety-tomentose stem like *M. alliaceus* but with a reddish brown cap and growing in clusters on fallen wood. Spores $7.5\text{--}10 \times 3.5\text{--}5 \mu\text{m}$.



Fig. 4. *Gymnopus brassicolens*

Very similar to *G. foetidus* above but with a smoother cap and a rather glossy, not tomentose stem. It also has much smaller spores $5.5\text{--}7.5 \times 2.5\text{--}4.0 \mu\text{m}$. Found on woody debris and fallen branches.

References

- Oliveira, J.J.S. *et al.* (2019). Progress on the phylogeny of the *Omphalotaceae*: *Gymnopus* s. str., *Marasmiellus* s. str., *Paragymnopus* gen. nov. and *Pusillomyces* gen. nov. *Mycological Progress* 18:713–739.
- Legon, N.W. & Henrici, A. (2005). *Checklist of the British & Irish Basidiomycota*. Kew.