

MYXOMYCETES

(also called plasmodial slime molds
or myxogastrids)

A glossary of common terms

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The myxomycetes are a group of relatively obscure organisms that inhabit plant surfaces, litter and soil. They are heterotrophic motile organisms and produce spores as a mechanism for reproduction and dispersal.

The terminology associated with their identification is somewhat specific and occasionally unfamiliar. This glossary is intended to assist both the novice and experienced scientist when clarification of terminology is required. The buttons below will take you to terms beginning with those letters, then clicking on the term will take you to the definitions and illustrations.

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Aethaliate: Producing or suggestive of the aethalium type of fruiting body (see [aethalium](#) image).

Aethalium

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Aethalium (plural aethalia): A relatively large, sessile, round or mound-shaped fruiting body formed from all or a major portion of a plasmodium.



Enteridium sp.



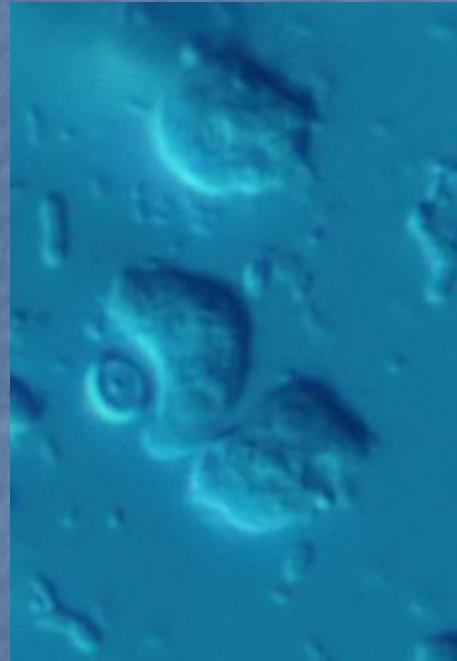
Lygogala *epidendrum*

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Amoeboflagellate cell: A general term used to refer to either of the uninucleate haploid trophic stages (i.e., myxamoeba or swarm cell) in the myxomycete life cycle.



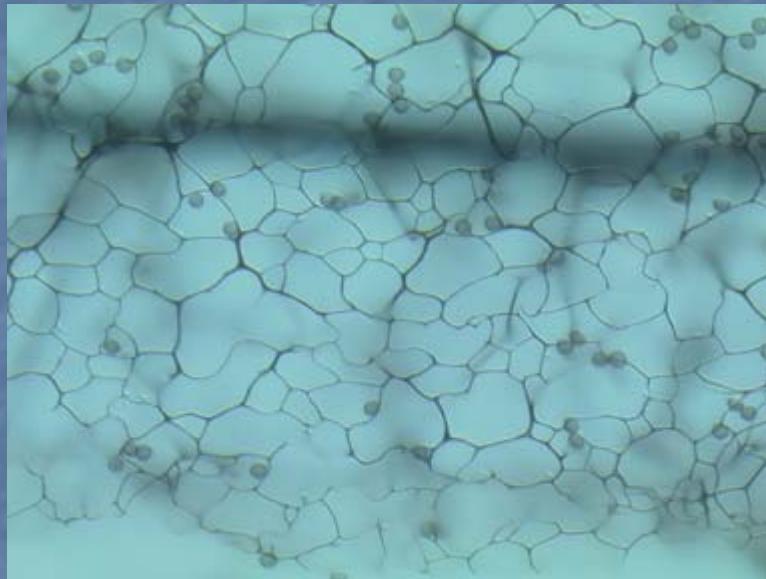
Swarm cell



Myxamoebae

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Anastomosed: Interconnected or joined repeatedly to form a network.



Anastomosed surface net of
Stemonitis fusca

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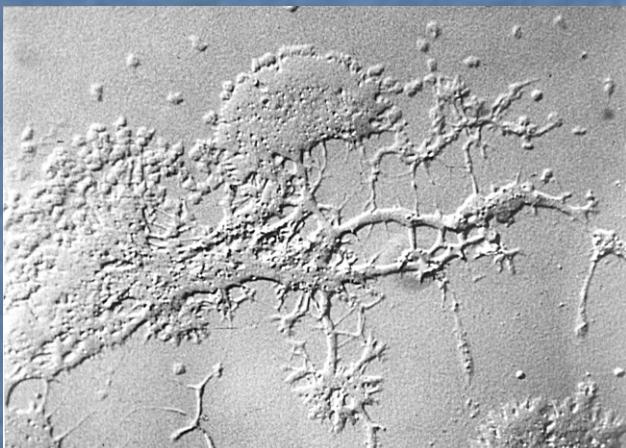
Angular: Having an angle or angles; not rounded in outline.



Perichaena depressa

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Aphanoplasmodium (plural aphanoplasmodia): A type of plasmodium that is flat, transparent, and difficult to observe in nature; it generally is evident only when it heaps up in preparation for the formation of fruiting bodies; characteristic of members of the Stemonitales.



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Areolate: Having a surface divided into smaller areas by cracks or crevices.



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Asperulate: Having a surface that appears rough because of the presence of small warts or spines.



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Attenuate: Gradually narrowed; becoming smaller and thinner.



Attenuate capillitial tip in *Trichia decipiens*

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Badhamioid: A type of capillitium consisting entirely of limy elements.

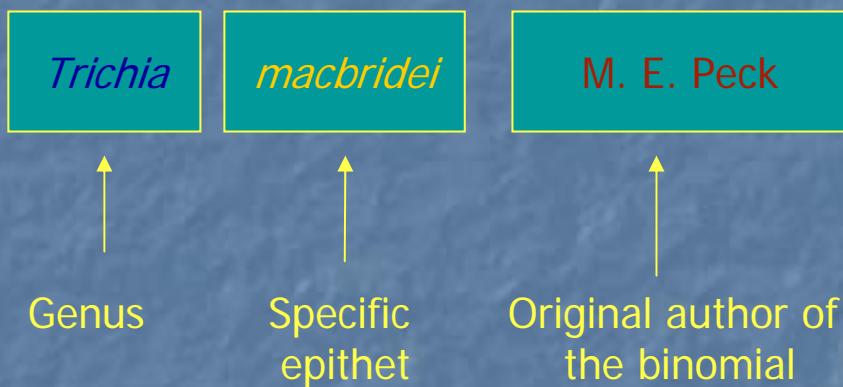
Badhamioid capillitium



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Binomial: A two-word term that represents the name of a particular species. The first word (the genus) is capitalized while the second word (the specific epithet) is never capitalized. Following the Binomial is the authority that refers to the individual(s) who named the species. The binomial is either italicized or underlined.

Trichia macbridei M. E. Peck or Trichia macbriei M. E. Peck



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Bryophilous: Living on, or at least associated with, bryophytes (mosses and liverworts).



Leafy liverwort

Lepidoderma tigrinum

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Calyculus (plural calyculi): A persistent cuplike structure formed from the basal portion of the peridium and surrounding the base of the spore mass.



Calyculus

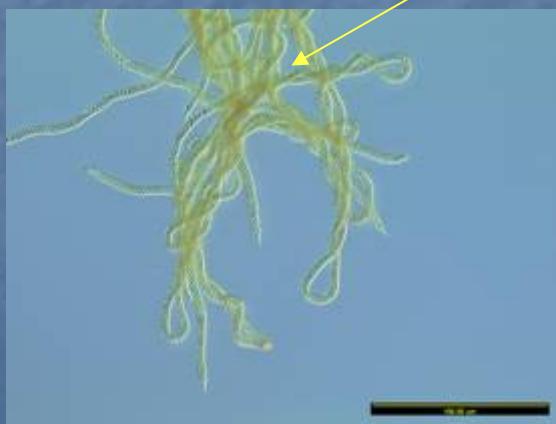


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Capillitium (plural capillitia): A system of sterile elements found within the spore mass of many myxomycetes.

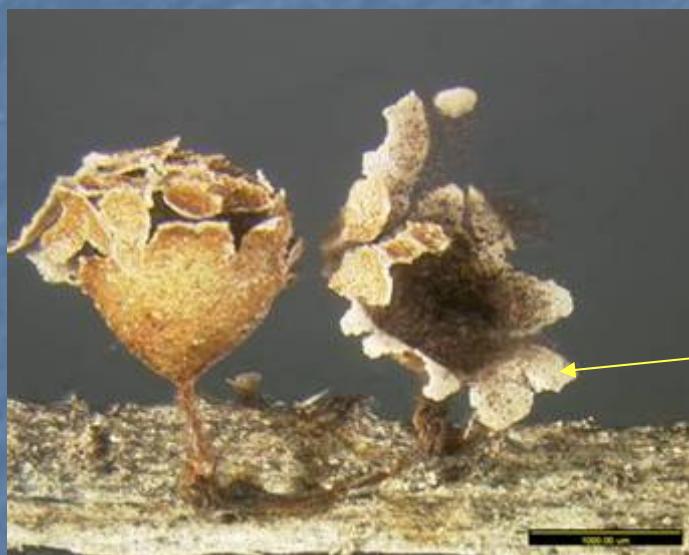


Capillitium



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Cartilaginous: Consisting of a stout, uniformly thickened and usually rather stiff layer.



Diderma floriforme

Cartilaginous peridium



Leocarpus fragilis

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Cellular slime molds: A group of organisms with a uninucleate, amoeboid trophic stage similar to the one found in the myxomycetes but not forming plasmodia or the types of fruiting bodies characteristic of the latter group.



Aggregating myxamoebae



Slug and developing sorocarp



Sorocarp

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Cinereous: Bluish gray; the color of ashes.

NOTE: Colors will vary depending on monitor calibration.



Sporangium of
Arcyria cinerea

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Circumscissile: Dehiscing along a line around the middle.



Circumscissile dehiscence
in *Perichaena corticalis*

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Clavate: Club-shaped.



Craterium aureum



Hemitrichia clavata

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Clustered: Occurring close together in the same small area of the substrate.



Clustered sporangia of
Stemonitis axifera



Clustered sporangia of
Hemitrichia clavata

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Columella (plural columellae): A sterile structure that extends into the spore mass from below; in stipitate forms it appears to represents an extension of the stalk that continues upward.



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Compressed: Pressed together; flattened.



Physarum compressum



Physarum bilvalve

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Concolorous: Having the same color.



Concolorous peridium and capillitium of
Hemitrichia serpula

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Conical: More or less cone-shaped.



Conical aethalia of
Lycogala conicum

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Convoluted: Coiled or twisted.



Convoluted capillitial elements

Metatrachia vesparium

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Coprophilous: Dung-inhabiting; occurring on dung.



Perichaena liceoides on
bison dung

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Cortex: The thick covering over the spore mass of an aethalium.



Aethalium of *Fuligo septica* with a dark spore mass and a lighter cortex.

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Corticolous: Living on bark; associated with the bark surface of living trees.



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Cylindrical: Having the general form of a cylinder; a term applied to a structure with essentially the same diameter throughout its length.



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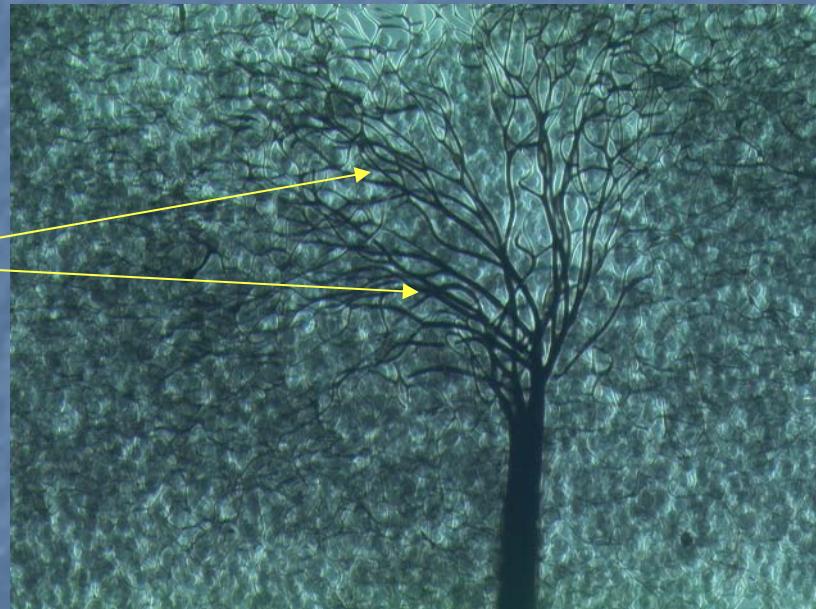
Dehiscence: The splitting of the peridium (or cortex) in mature fruiting bodies to expose the spore mass.



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Dendroid: Treelike; branching like a tree.

Dendroid capillitium of
Lamproderma arcyronema



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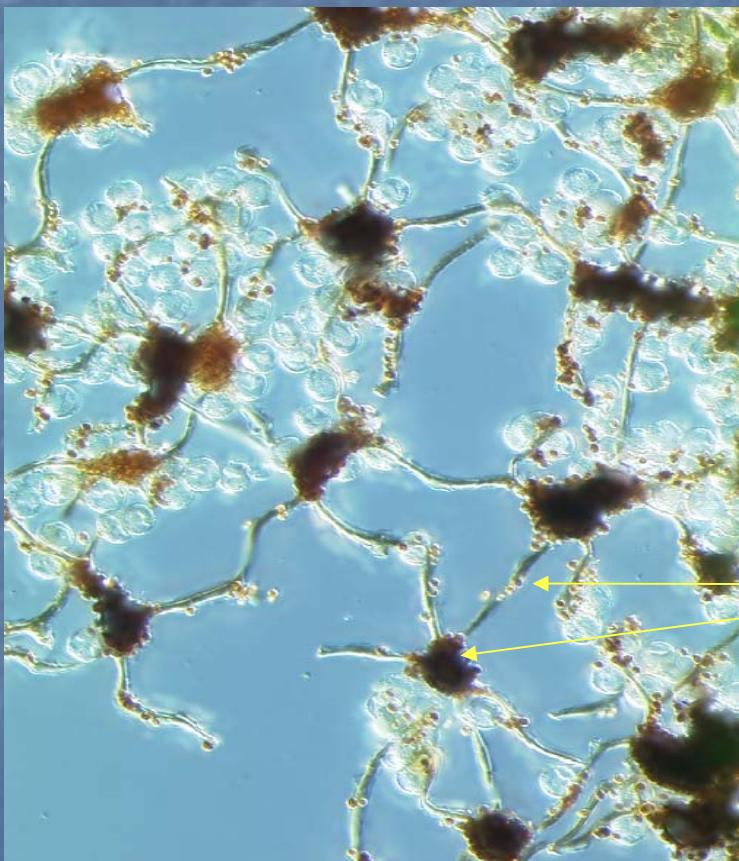
Dichotomous: Branching or forking into two more or less equal parts.

Dichotomous branching in the capillitium of a *Lamproderma*



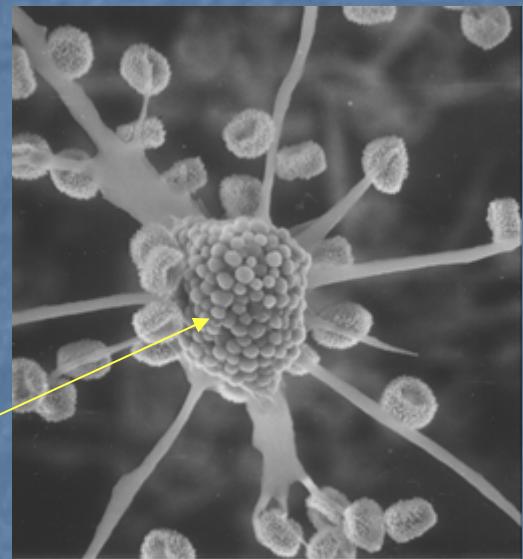
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Dictydine granules: Microscopic and usually dark-colored structures found in the fruiting bodies of some members of the Liceales; also called plasmodic granules.



Cribaria tenella

Dictydine
granules



Cribaria sp.

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Discoid: Disk-shaped.



Discoid sporangia of
Physarum nutans

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Dictyostelids: See cellular slime molds.

Cellular slime molds

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Echinate: Spiny; having a surface covered with sharp-pointed spines.



Capillitium of *Perichaena chrysosperma*



Spore of *Lamproderma* sp.

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Effused: Flattened or spread out over the substrate.



Diderma effusum
on a leaf

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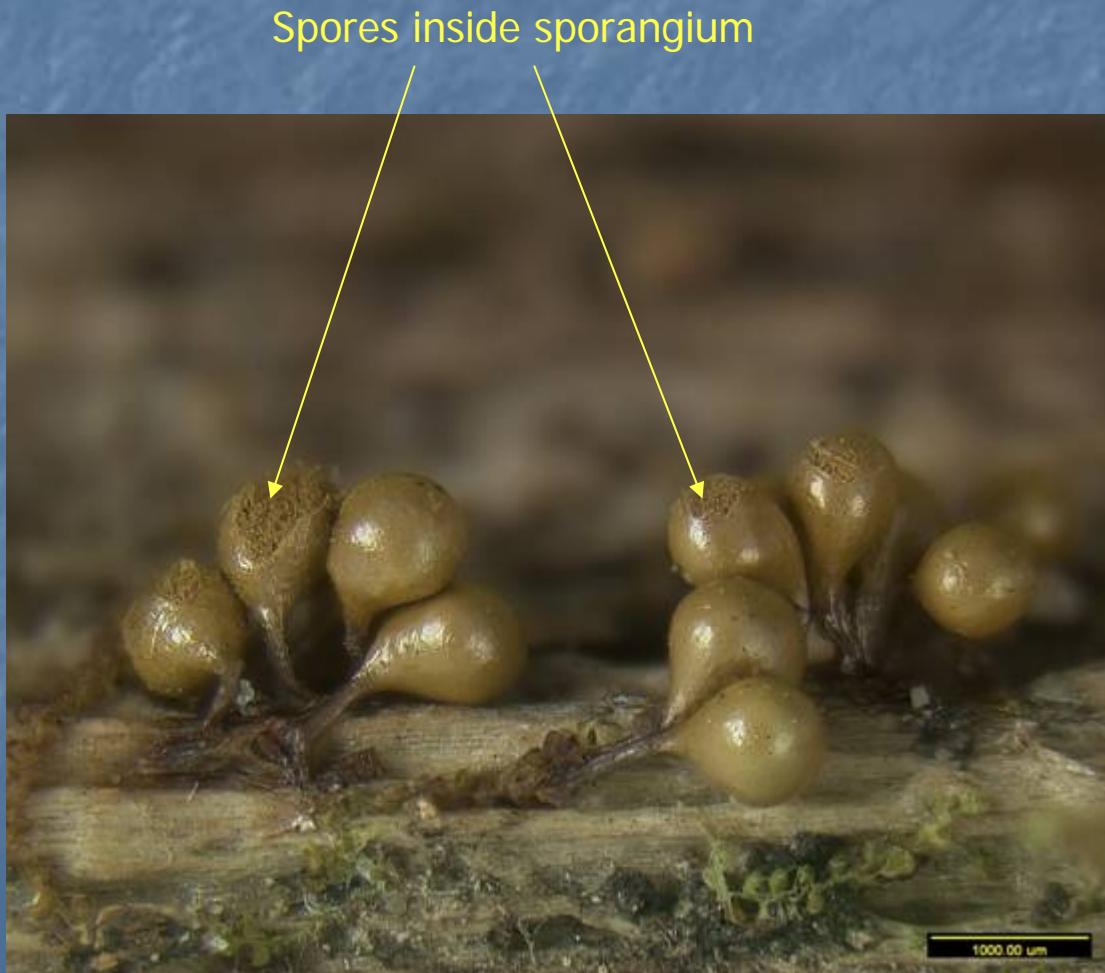
Elater: A single, free, simple or branched capillitrial strand; characteristic of some members of the Trichiales.

Elaters in *Trichia decipiens*



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Endosporous: Having spores borne within the fruiting body; characteristic of all myxomycetes except members of the Ceratiomyxales.



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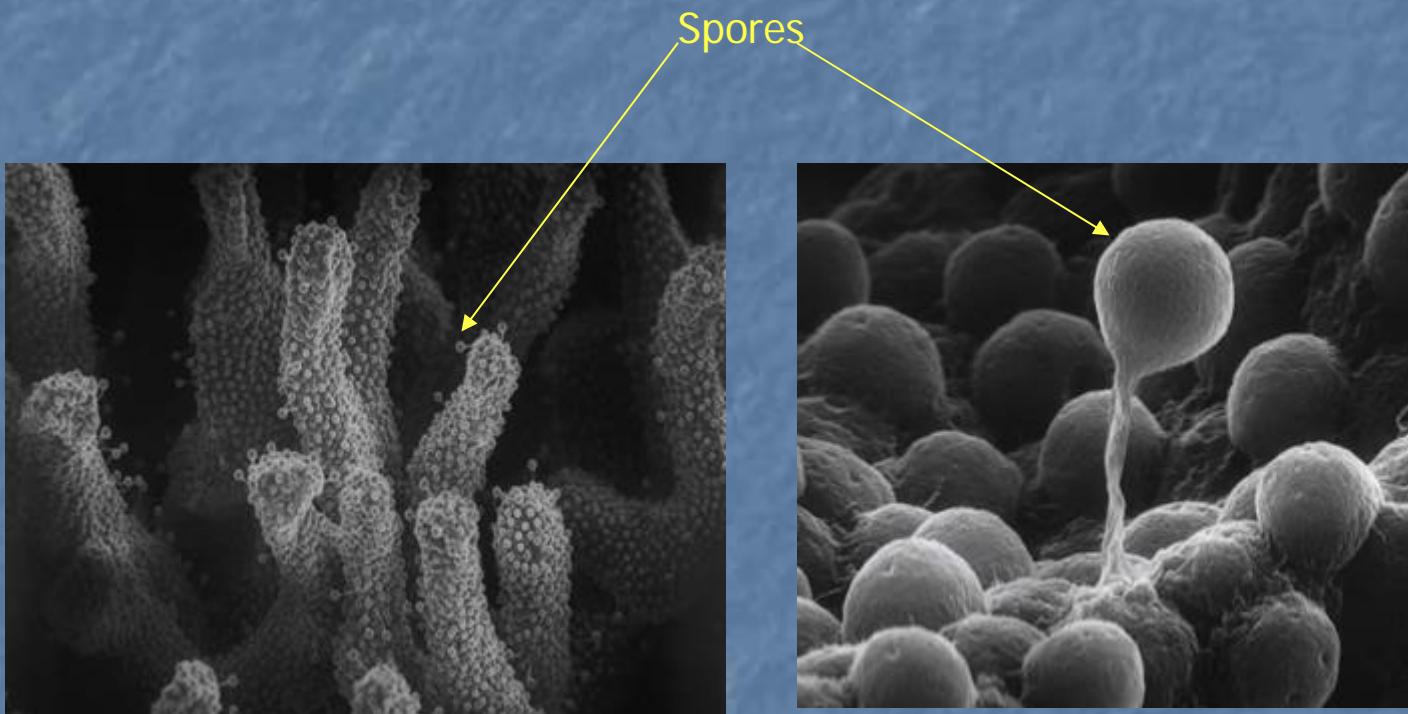
Epiphytic: Growing or occurring upon other plants.



Leucocarpus fragilis as an epiphyte on a lycopod

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Exosporous: Having spores borne on the outer surface of the fruiting body; a condition found only in the Ceratiomyxales.



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Fasciculate: Occurring close together in small groups or bundles.



Fasciculate sporangia of
Stemonitis axifera

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Ferruginous: Rust-colored; having the color of iron rust.



Ferruginous sporangia
of *Arcyria* sp.

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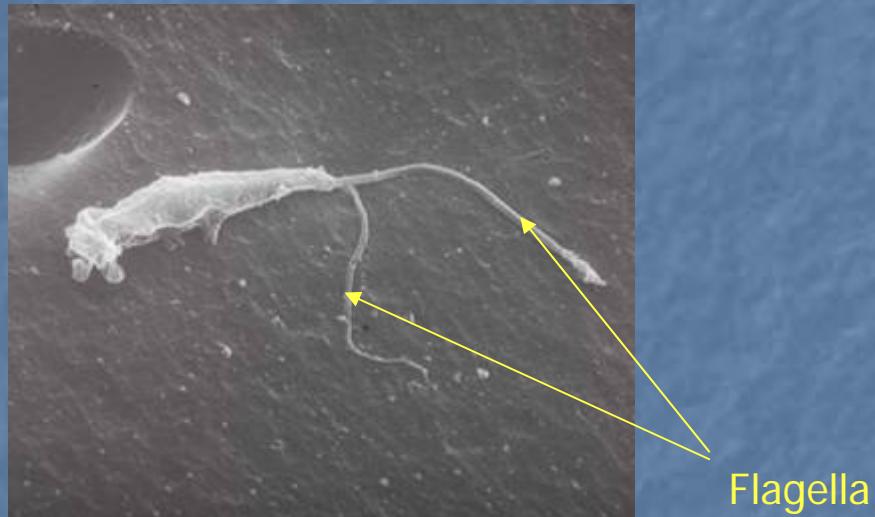
Flagellate: Possessing one or more flagella.



Flagellate swarm cell

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Flagellum (plural flagella): A relatively long and whiplike structure used in locomotion; characteristic of swarm cells.

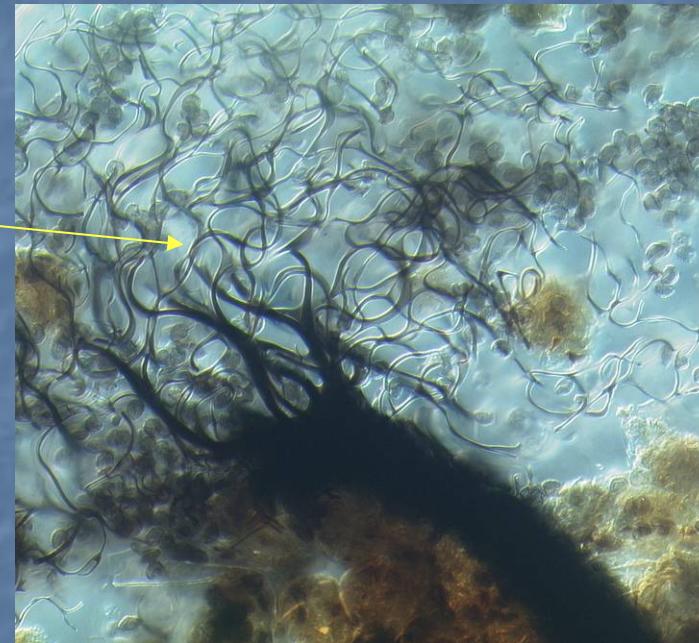


Flagella

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Flexuous: Having bends or curves; crooked.

Flexuous capillitia of
Lamproderma arcyrionema



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Floriform: Having a pattern of dehiscence in which the peridium splits into lobes arranged like the petals of a flower; also called petaloid.



Physarella oblonga



Diderma asteroides

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Fructification: See [Fruiting body](#).

Fruiting Body

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Fruiting body: A general term for the spore-producing structure produced during the reproductive stage in the myxomycete life cycle; the structure within which (or in one case, on the surface of which) the spores are produced; also referred to as a fructification or sporophore.



Sporangium



Aethalium



Plasmodiocarp



Pseudoaethalium

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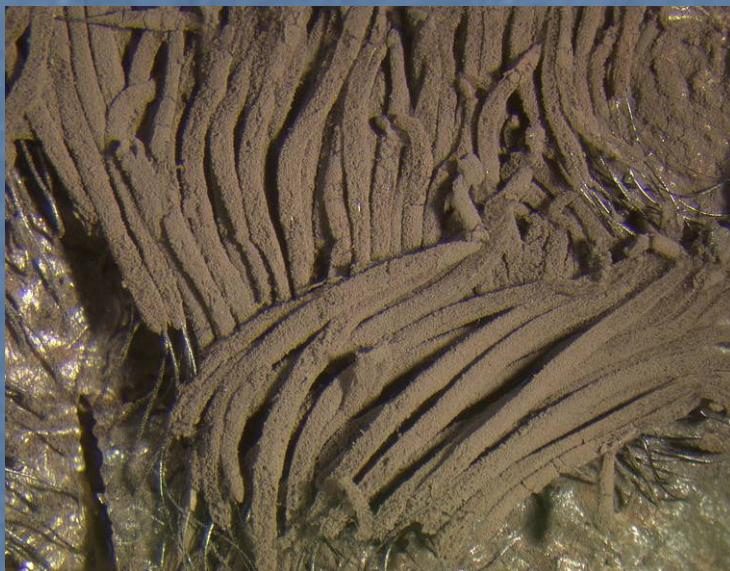
Fungivorous: Fungus-feeding; feeding upon the fruiting bodies or vegetative hyphae of fungi.



Fungivorous plasmodium on
a basidiomycete

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Fuscous: Brownish gray; smoky drab or dusky in color.



Fuscous sporangia of
Stemonitis fusca

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Fusiform: Spindle-shaped; tapering at both ends.



Fusiform sporangia of
Lamproderma fusiforme

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Gamete: A haploid reproductive cell capable of fusing with another similar cell to produce a diploid zygote.



Gametes of *Physarum pusillum*
prior to fusion

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Globose: Spherical; having the general form or shape of a ball.



Lamproderma carestiae
sporangia

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Gregarious: Occurring relatively close together in the same general area of the substrate but not clustered.

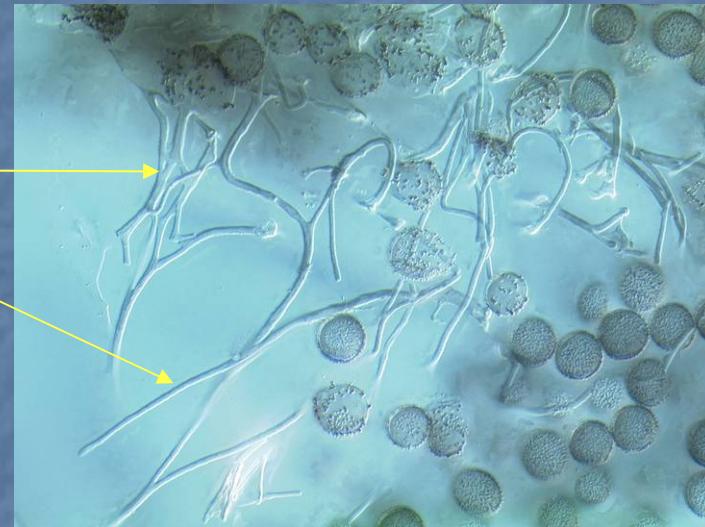


Trichia favoginea

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Hyaline: Clear or transparent.

Hyaline capillitia of
Didymium melanospermum



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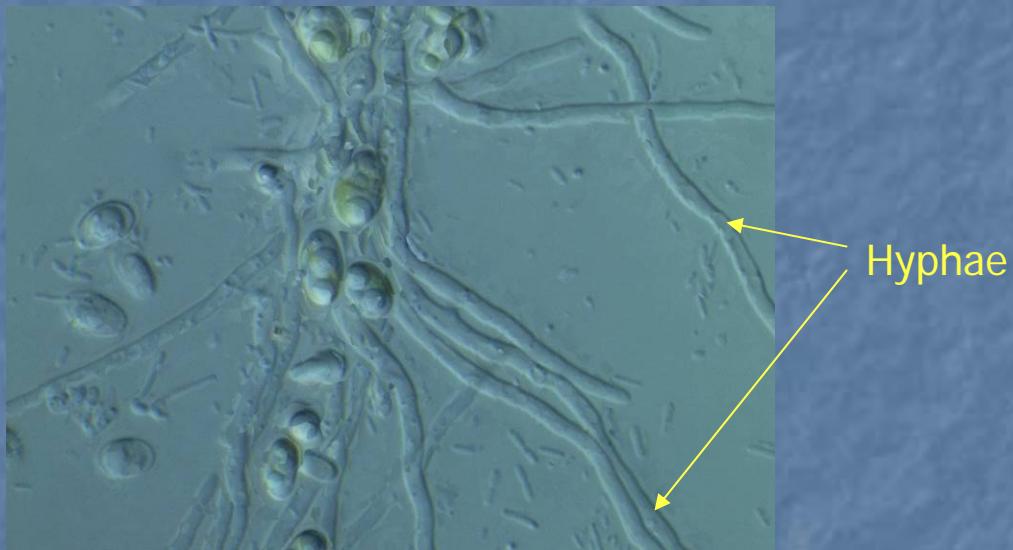
Hygroscopic: Absorbing or releasing moisture in response to changes in atmospheric humidity and consequently changing shape.



Elaters change shape as humidity changes

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Hypha (plural hyphae): One of the individual strands or threadlike elements that make up the vegetative body of a fungus.



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Hypothallus (plural hypothalli): A thin layer deposited by a plasmodium at the time of fruiting; located on the substrate beneath one or more fruiting bodies.

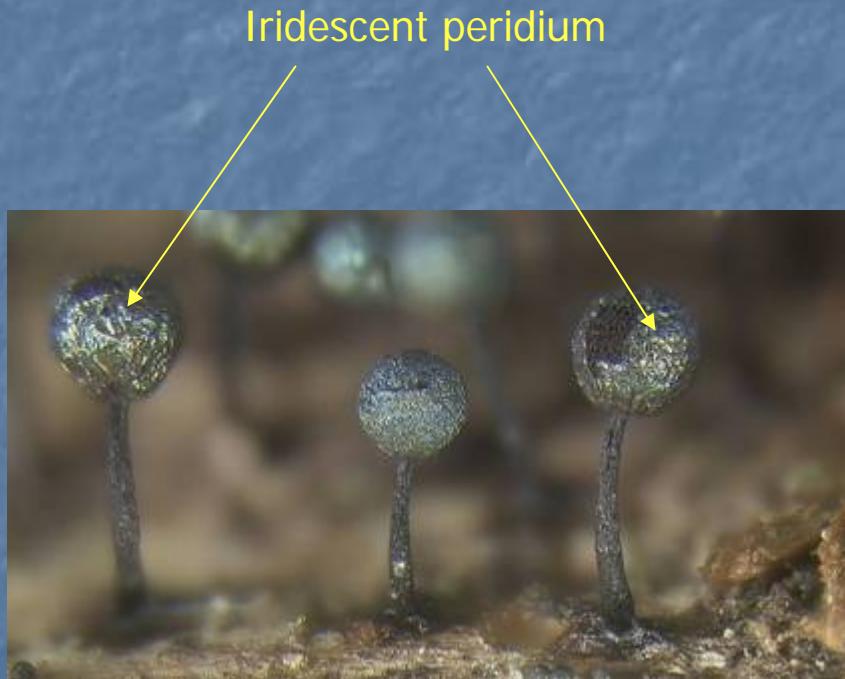


Hypothallus



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Iridescent: Displaying rainbowlike colors.



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Lenticular: Shaped like a double convex lens.

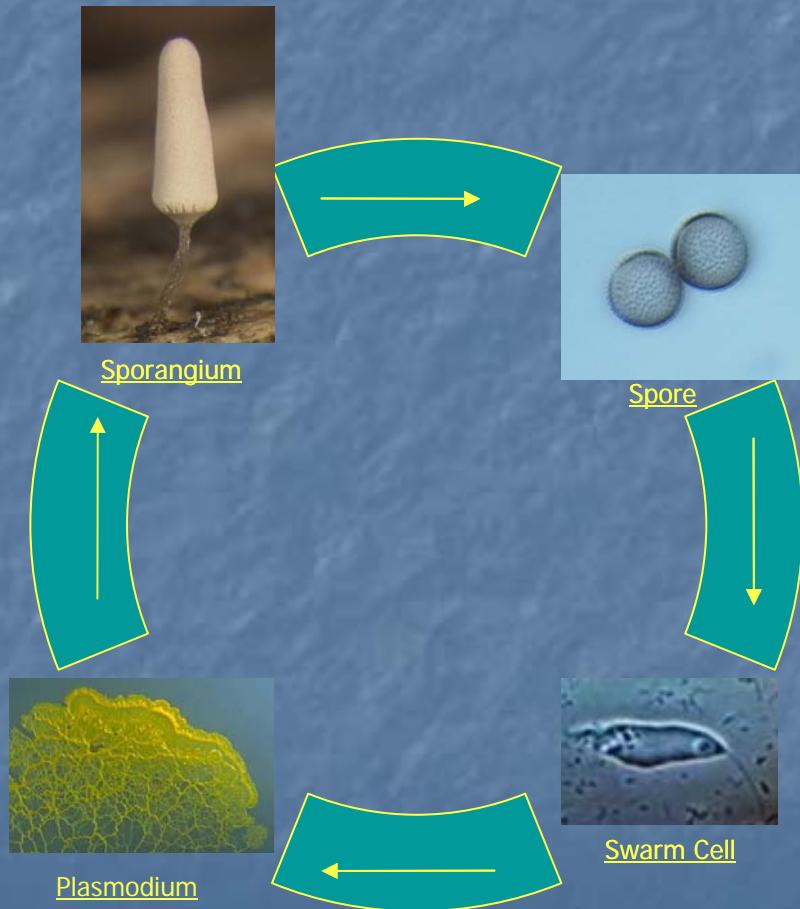


Lenticular sproangia of
Physarum viride

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Life cycle: The series of events or stages involved in the perpetuation of an organism.

Myxomycete Life Cycle



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Lignicolous: Living on or within wood.



Lycogala on a dead log

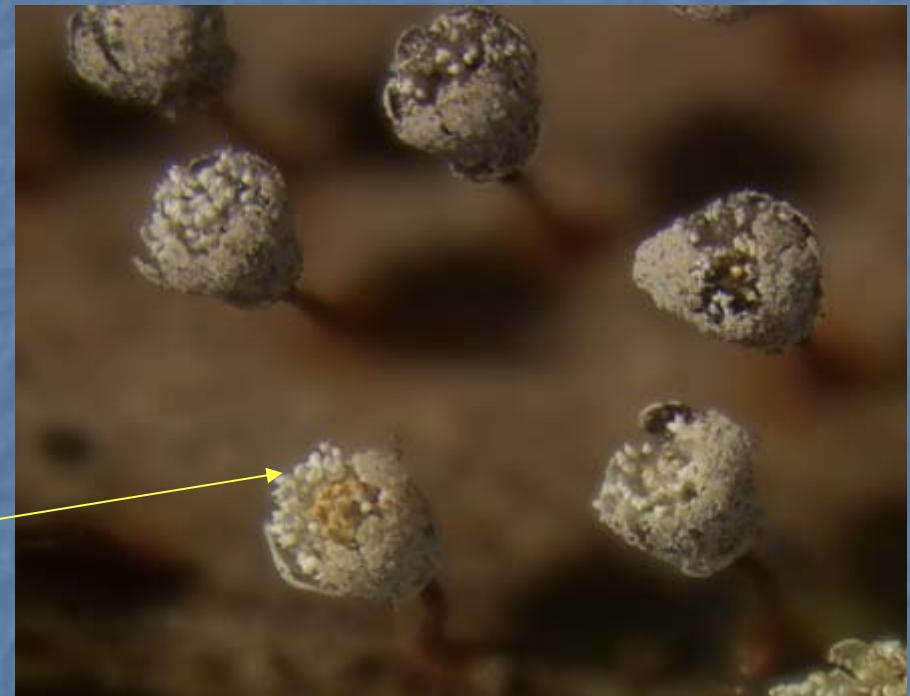


Trichia pusilla on wood

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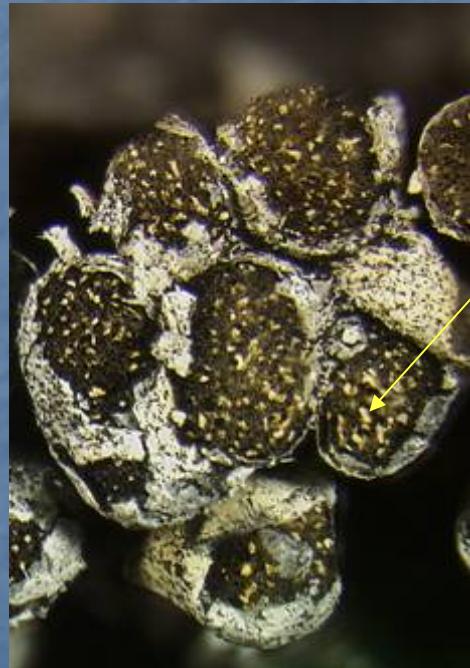
Lime node: An enlarged, lime-containing junction in the capillitium; characteristic of some members of the Physarales.

Lime nodes



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Limy: Containing lime (calcium carbonate).



Limy nodes

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Membranous: Consisting of a thin, pliable layer.



Membranous peridium

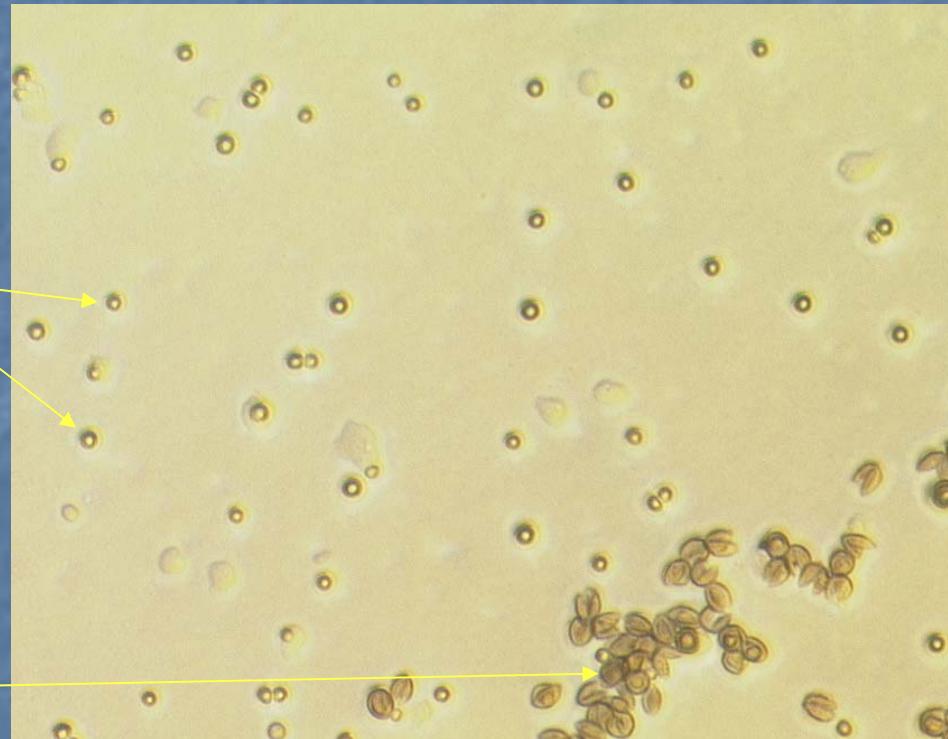
Lamproderma atrosporum

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Microcyst: A resistant structure formed when a myxamoeba ceases its activity and becomes dormant.

Microcysts of *Physarum pusillum* on an agar plate

Empty spore cases



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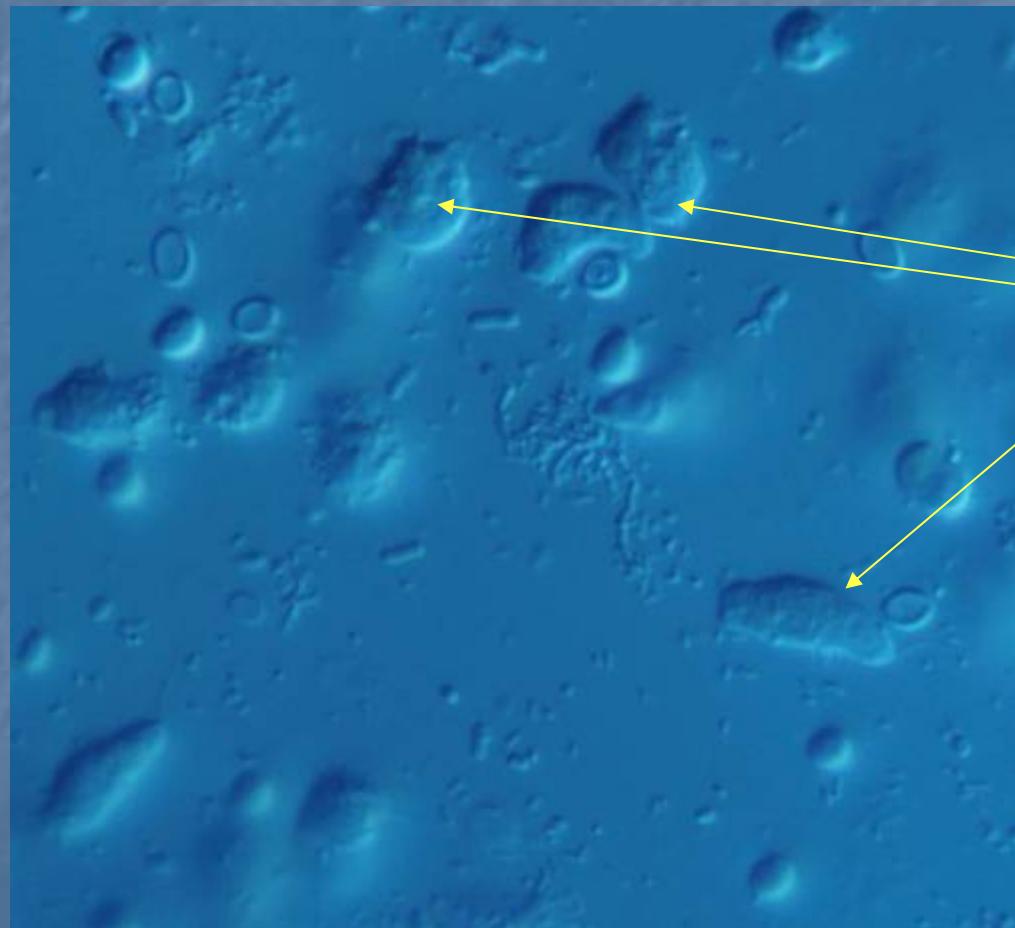
Moist chamber culture: a simple system used to isolate myxomycetes from samples of dead plant material collected in nature.



Note collection and culture data

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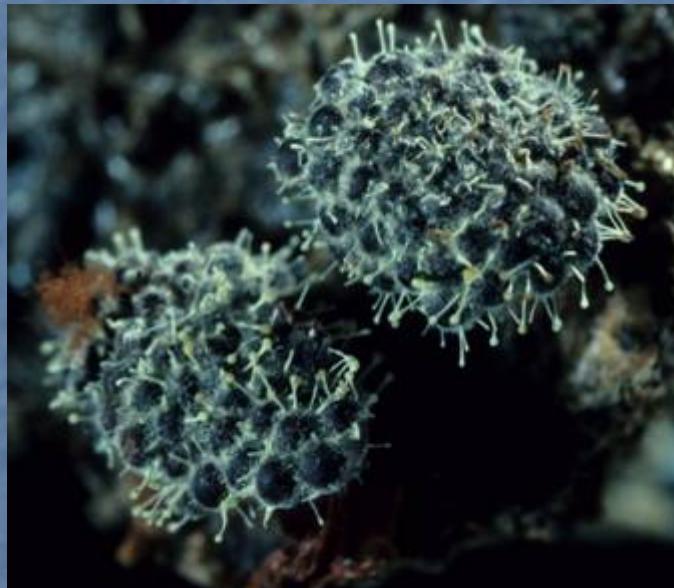
Myxamoeba (plural myxamoebae): The microscopic, uninucleate amoeboid trophic stage in the myxomycete life cycle that also may function as a gamete.



Myxamoebae

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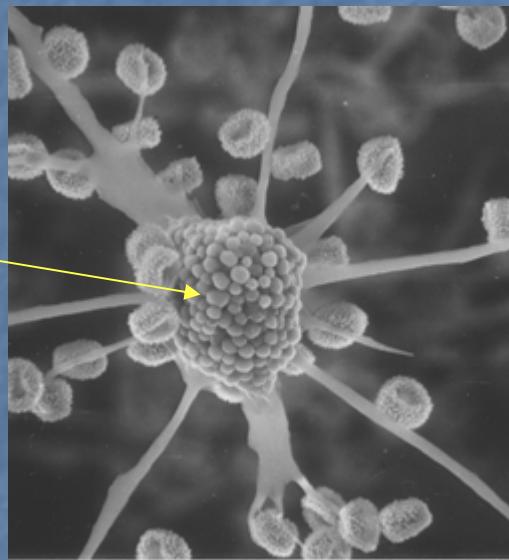
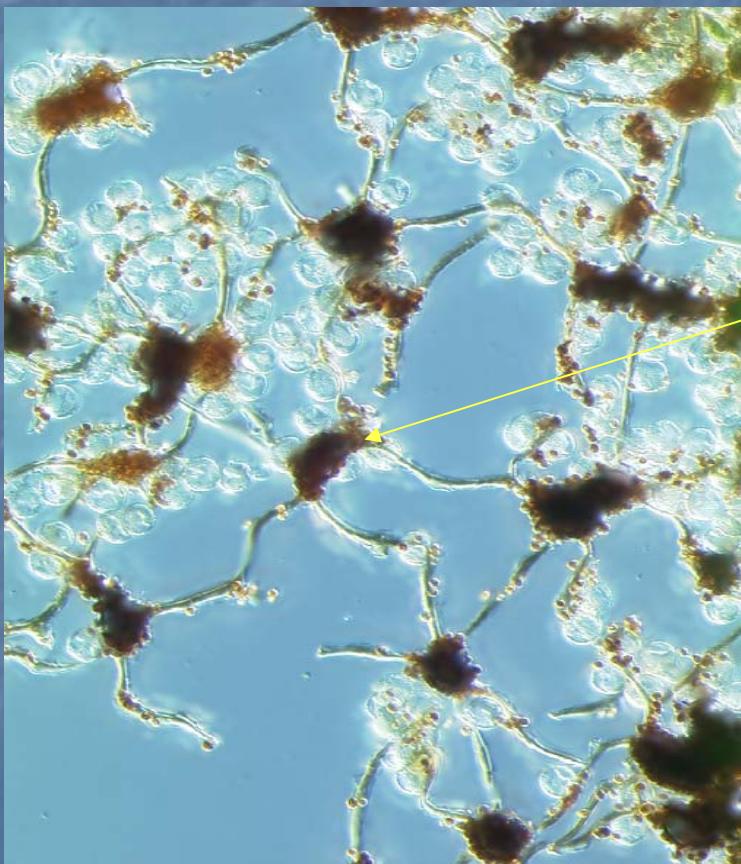
Myxomyceticolous: Living on or within the fruiting bodies of myxomycetes.



Sporangia of *Metatrichia vesparium* with the myxomyceticolous hyphomycete
Polycephalomyces tomentosus

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Node: An expanded junction in the peridial net of the fruiting body in some members of the Liceales.



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Obovate: Ovate with the narrow end at the base.



Badhamia utricularis

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Obpyriform: Pear-shaped with the broad end uppermost.



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Ochraceous: Pale yellow to reddish yellow.



Ochraceous spores of *Trichia favoginea*

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Olivaceous: Dull yellowish green; the color of an olive.



Olivaceous sporangia of *Trichia decipiens*

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Operculate: Having a preformed lid-like covering (operculum) over the upper portion of a sporangium.



Metatrichia vesparium



Perichaena depressa

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Operculum: A lid or cover.



Perichaena corticalis

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Ovate: Egg-shaped; having the general form or shape of an egg.



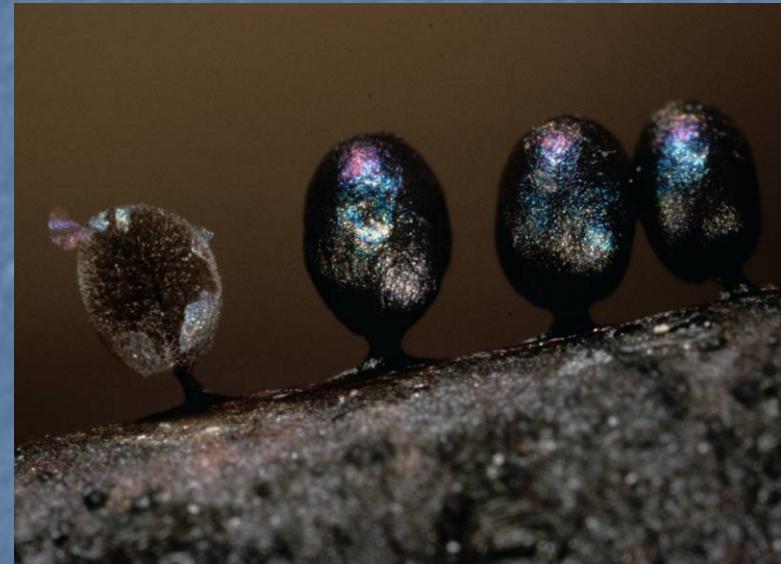
Ovate sporangia of
Leocarpus fragilis

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Ovoid: Egg-shaped; usually pertaining to solid bodies.



Ovoid sporangia of
Leocarpus fragilis



Lamproderma sp.

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Palisade: A condition in which more or less elongated fruiting bodies or other structures are closely packed together in a perpendicular arrangement.



Palisade sporangia



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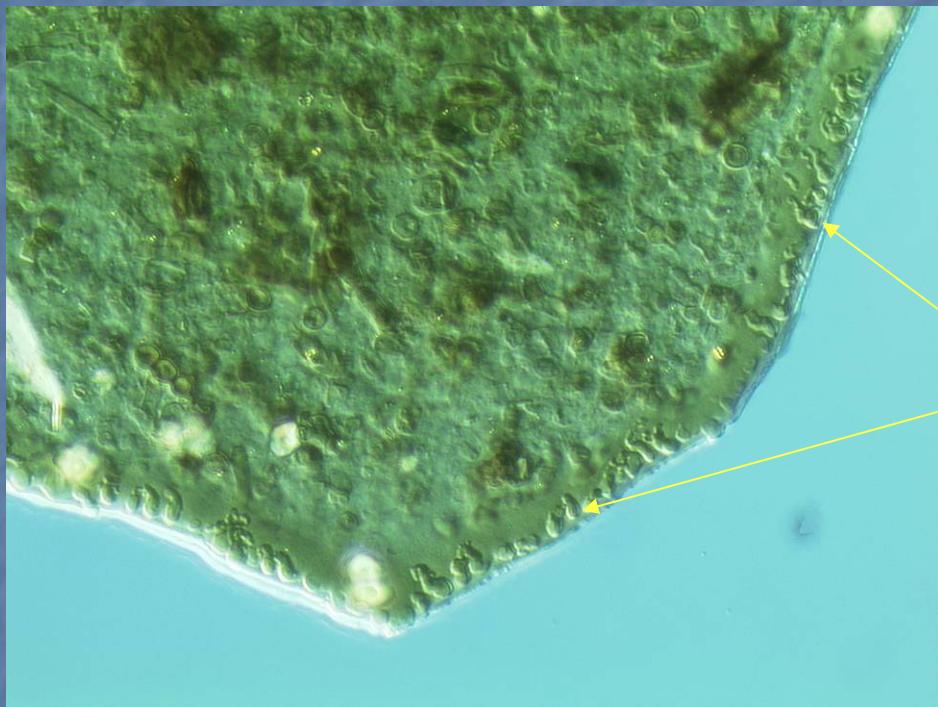
Pallid: Having a pale or white appearance.



Pallid sporangia of
Arcyria cinerea

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Papillate: Having a surface with one or more nipple-shaped raised areas (papillae).



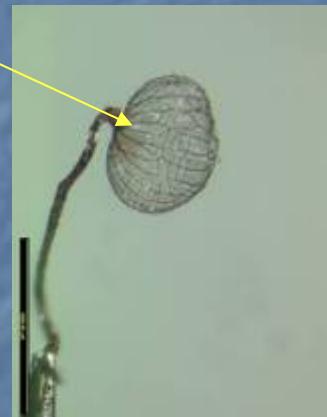
Papillate margin of a peridial plate from *Licea minima*

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Peridial net: A reticulate structure formed when certain portions of the peridium persist in a mature fruiting body; characteristic of some members of the Liceales.



Peridial net



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Peridium (plural peridia): The covering over the spore mass of a fruiting body.



Peridium

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Perithecium (plural perithecia): Flask-shaped fruiting bodies produced by some ascomycetes.



Perithecia of ascomycetes are commonly mistaken for myxomycetes

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Persistent: Retaining the original shape or structure; not breaking up or disappearing.



Persistent peridium in *Leocarpus fragilis*

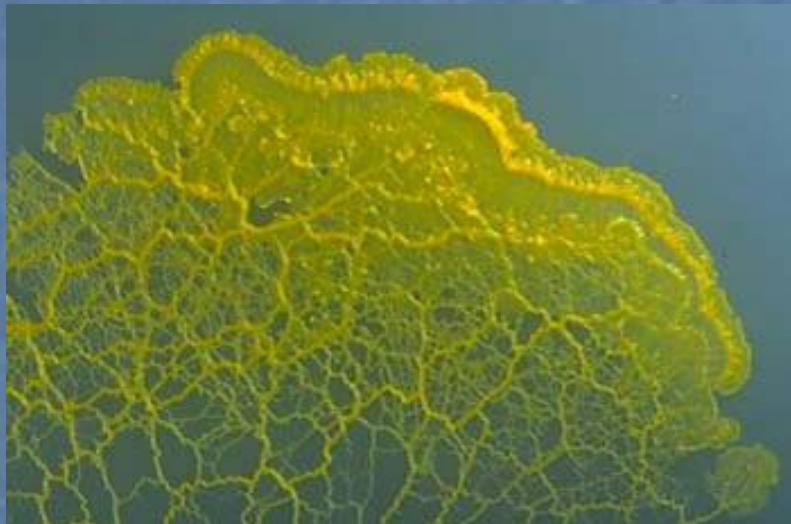
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Petaloid: See [Floriform](#).

Floriform

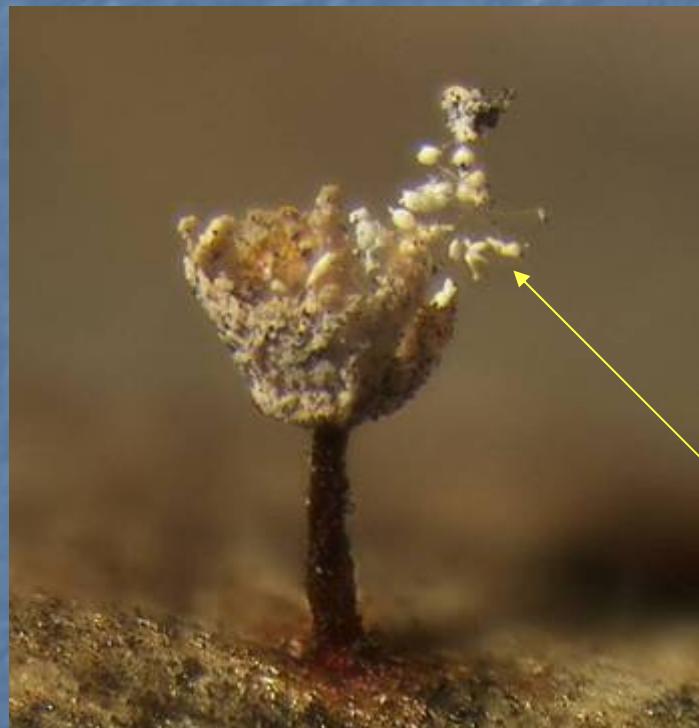
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Phaneroplasmodium (plural *phaneroplasmodia*): A type of plasmodium that may be relatively large and conspicuous enough to be observed in nature; it is characterized by a fan-shaped advancing margin.



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Physaroid: A type of capillitium consisting of slender noncalcareous threads connecting larger calcareous nodes.



Craterium leucocephalum

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Plasmodic granules: See Dictydine granules.

Dictydine granules

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Plasmodiocarp: A sessile, branched, ring-shaped, or netted type of fruiting body formed when a plasmodium becomes concentrated in its main veins (without breaking up into smaller units) during fruiting.



Hemitrichia serpula

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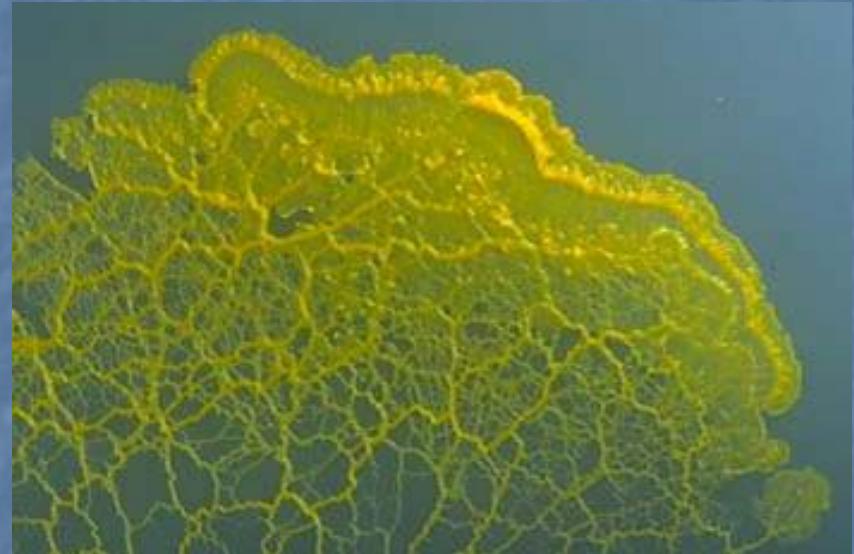
Plasmodiocarpous: Producing (or at least suggestive of) the plasmodiocarp type of fruiting body

Plasmodium (plural: **plasmodia**): The acellular, multinucleate mass of protoplasm representing the main trophic stage in the myxomycete life cycle (see plasmodiocarp).

Plasmodiocarp

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Plasmodium: (plural plasmodia): The acellular, multinucleate mass of protoplasm representing the main trophic stage in the myxomycete life cycle.



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Poroid: Having more or less evident pores.



Poroid sporangia of
Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa



Scanning electron micrograph
of a developing fruiting body
of *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*

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Prolate: Elongated toward the poles.



Prolate sporangia

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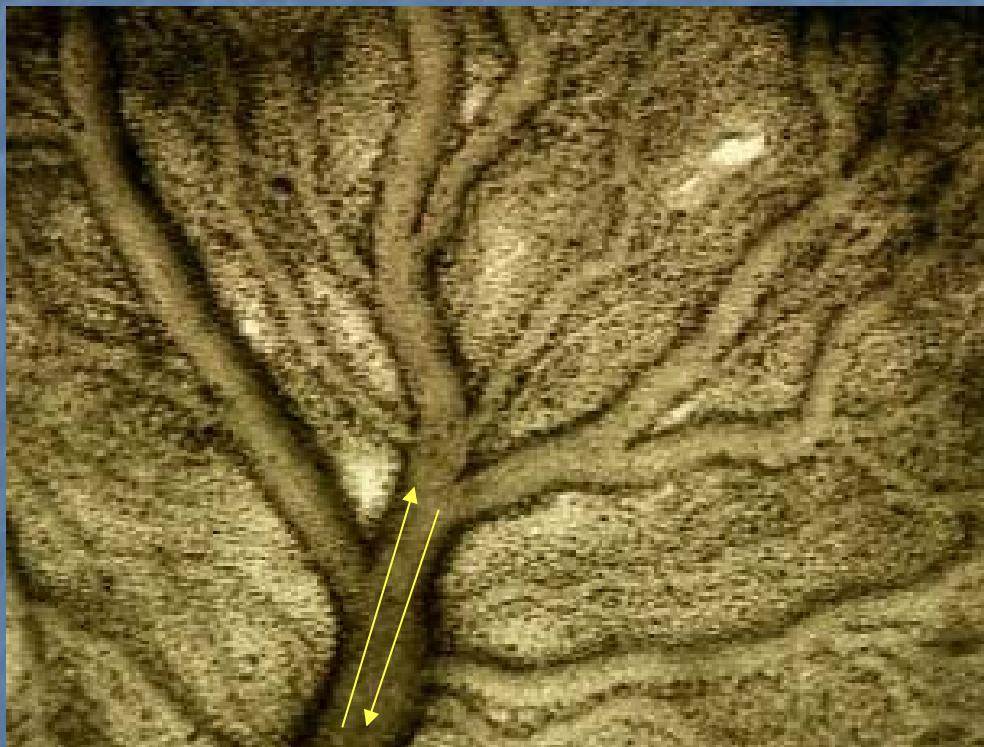
Prostrate: Lying flat on the substrate.



Perichaena quadrata

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Protoplasmic streaming: Movement of the protoplasm within the plasmodium; often readily apparent in the main veins.



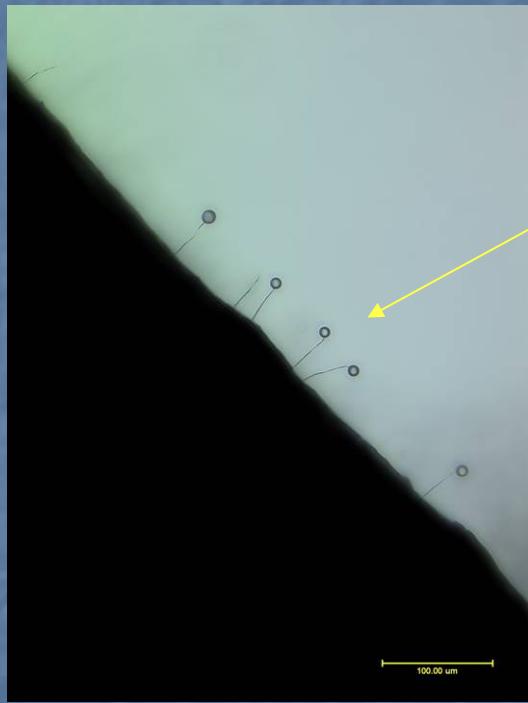
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Protoplasmodium (plural protoplasmodia): A type of plasmodium that remains microscopic, forms no veins, and gives rise to only a single rather small fruiting body.

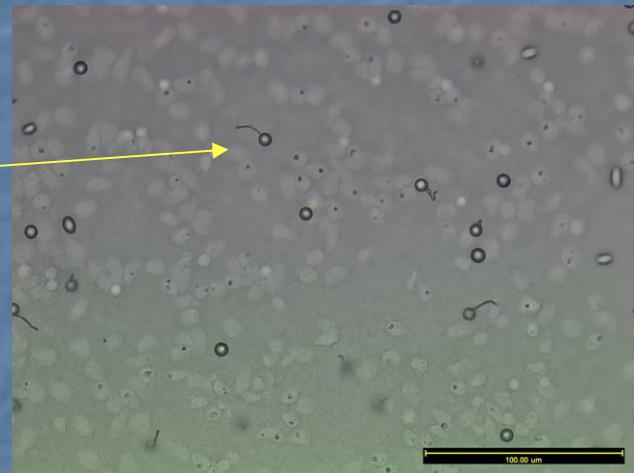


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Protostelids:



Protostelids



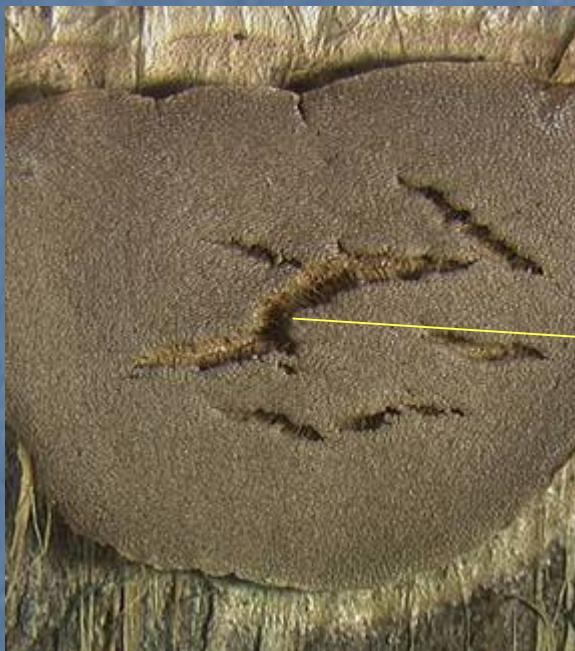
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Pseudoaethaliate: Producing or suggestive of the pseudoaethalium type of fruiting body (see pseudoaethalium).

Pseudoaethalium

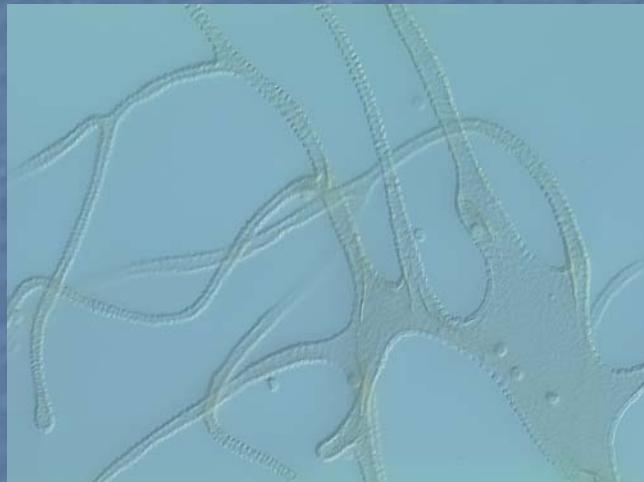
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Pseudaethalium (plural pseudaethalia): A type of fruiting body that consists of a mass of sporangia tightly packed together to resemble an aethalium.



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Pseudocapillitium (plural pseudocapillitia): A system of irregular plates, tubes, or threadlike elements occurring within the spore mass of an aethalium and suggestive of a true capillitium but not formed in the same manner; characteristic of some members of Liceales.



Pseudocapillitia of *Lycogala epidendrum*



Pseudocapillitia of *Enteridium* sp.

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Pseudocolumella (plural: *pseudocolumellae*): A spherical to irregular lime mass more or less centrally located within the spore mass and consisting of a single discrete body or a loose aggregation of smaller units.



Pseudocolumella



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Pseudoplasmodium (plural: pseudoplasmodia): A multicellular mass produced during the life cycle of a cellular slime mold.

Pseudoplasmodium of
Dictyostelium sp.



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Pulverulent: Having a surface that appears powdery.



Pulverulent peridium of
Didymium squamulosum

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Pulvinate: Cushion-shaped; having the general shape of a small cushion.



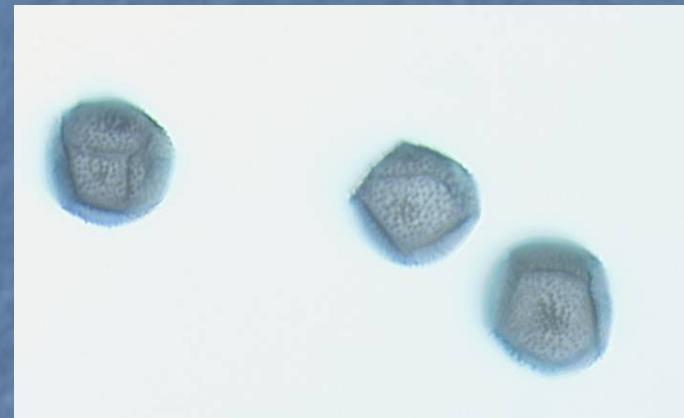
Pulvinate fruiting bodies of
Didymium ochroideum

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Punctate: Having a surface marked with very small warts or tiny depressions.



Punctate spores of
Stemonitis fusca



Punctate spores with ridges
of Badhamia gracilis

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Pyriform: Pear-shaped.



Pyriform sporangia of
Lamproderma sp.

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Recurved: Curving downward or backward.

Recurved peridium



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Reniform: Kidney-shaped.



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Reticulate: Netted; having a surface covered with a network of spines, warts, or ridges.



*Perichaena
echinospora*

Reticulate spores



Trichia favoginea

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Revolute: Having a margin that is rolled back or up.



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Rugose: Wrinkled; having a surface marked by coarse wrinkles.



Rugose stalks



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Saprophagous: Feeding upon nonliving organic matter.
Typical of true fungi such as the one seen here.



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Sclerotium (plural sclerotia): A dormant, hardened structure formed from the plasmodium under unfavorable environmental conditions.



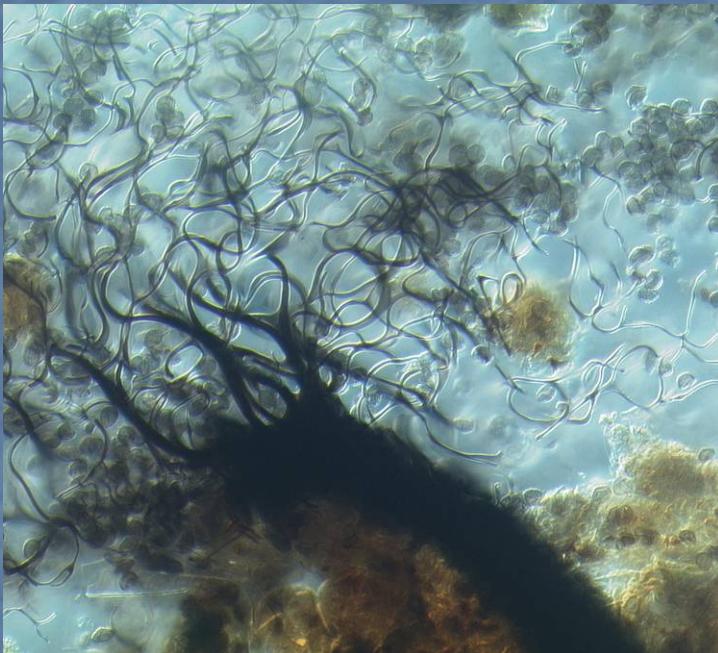
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Sessile: Lacking a stalk; attached directly to the substrate.



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Sinuous: Wavy; having curves, bends, or turns.



Sinuous capillitium of
Lamproderma arcyrionema

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Solitary: Occurring alone on the substrate.



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Sorocarp: The fruiting body produced by a cellular slime mold.



Sorocarp of *Dictyostelium discoideum*

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Spinulose: Having a surface marked with small spines.



Spinulose capillitium of
Metatrichia vesparium

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Spiny: See Echinate.

Echinate

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Sporangiate: Producing or suggestive of the sporangium type of fruiting body (see sporangium).

Sporangium

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Sporangium (plural sporangia): A type of fruiting body formed when a plasmodium breaks up into a number of small portions, each of which develops into a single stalked or sessile unit; a small plasmodium may form only one sporangium.



Lepidoderma tigrinum



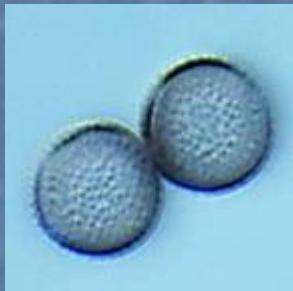
Physarum nucleatum



Hemitrichia clavata

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Spore: A resistant microscopic reproductive structure produced in the fruiting body of a myxomycete.



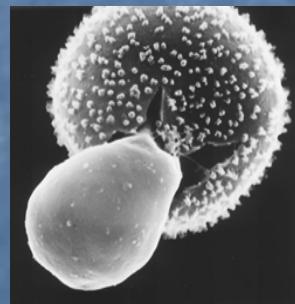
Stemonitis fusca



Perichaena echinospora



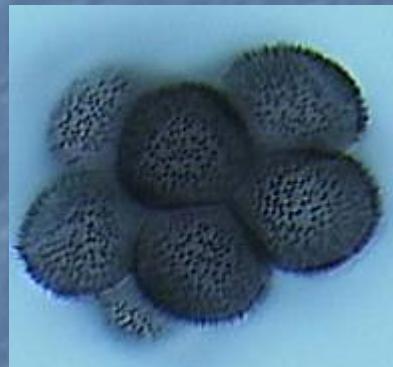
Trichia favogenia



Fuligo septica
spore germinating

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Spore ball: A group of spores joined closely together; characteristic of some members of the genus *Badhamia* and a few other myxomycetes.



Badhamia
nitens

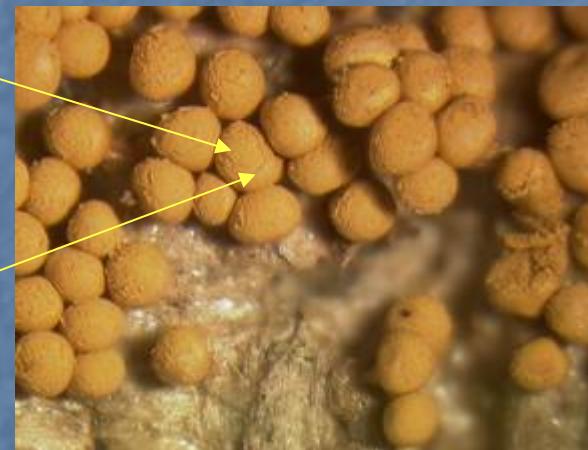
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Spore mass: All the spores within a single fruiting body when considered collectively.



Spore mass with capillitium

Peridium



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Sporophore: See Fruiting body.

Fruiting body

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Sporulate: To undergo sporulation (see sporulation).

Sporulation

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Sporulation: The fruiting process in which a plasmodium is transformed into one or more fruiting bodies.



Sporulation in *Stemonitis axifera*

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Stalk: A structure supporting the spore mass, which often is elevated some distance above the substrate; also called a stipe.



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Stellate: Star-shaped; having the general appearance of a star.



Diderma asteroides

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Stipe: See stalk.

Stalk

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Stipitate: Stalked; having a definite stalk.



Stipe or
Stalk



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Striate: Marked with fine parallel ridges.



Striate stalks

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Subcylindrical: Somewhat cylindrical.



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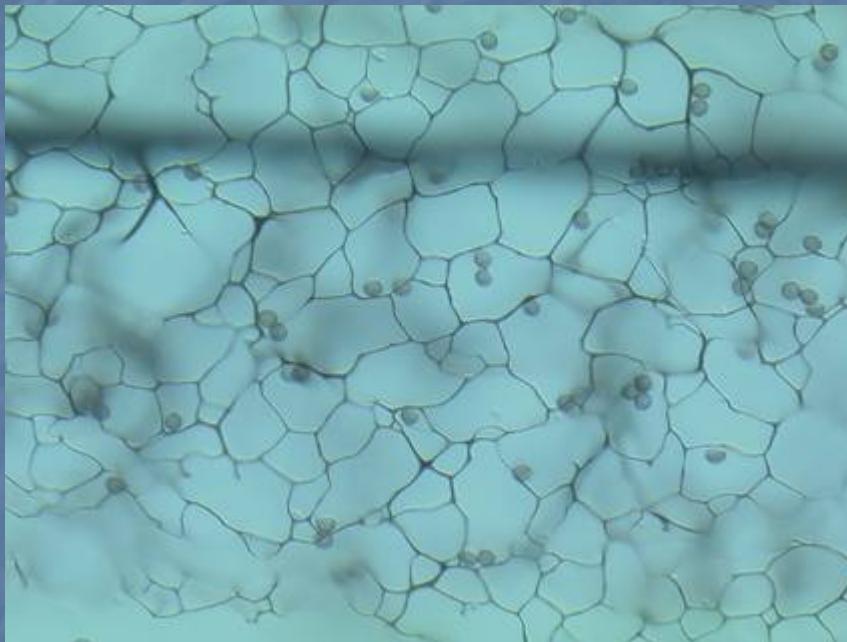
Subglobose: Not quite globose.



Didymium leoninum

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Surface net: A well-defined, often highly branched and anastomosing peripheral network found just beneath the peridium, where it arises from the tips of the capillitial branches; characteristic of the genus *Stemonitis*.



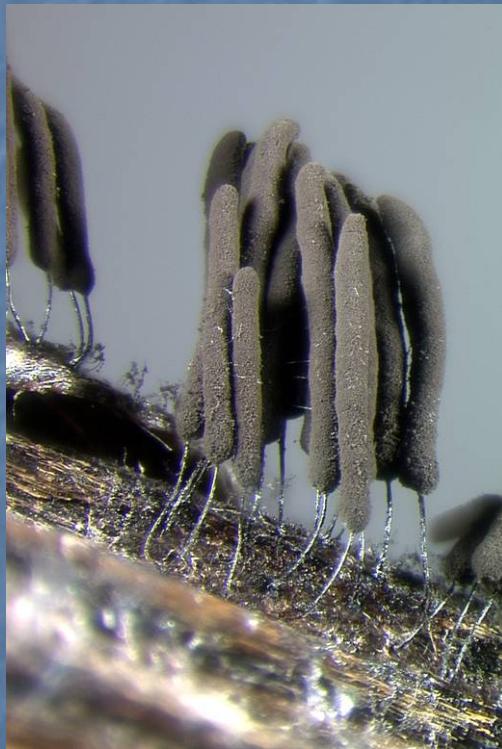
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Swarm cell: The microscopic, uninucleate flagellated trophic stage in the myxomycete life cycle that also may function as a gamete.



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Terete: More or less round in cross section; cylindrical.



Terete sporangia of
Stemonitis nigra

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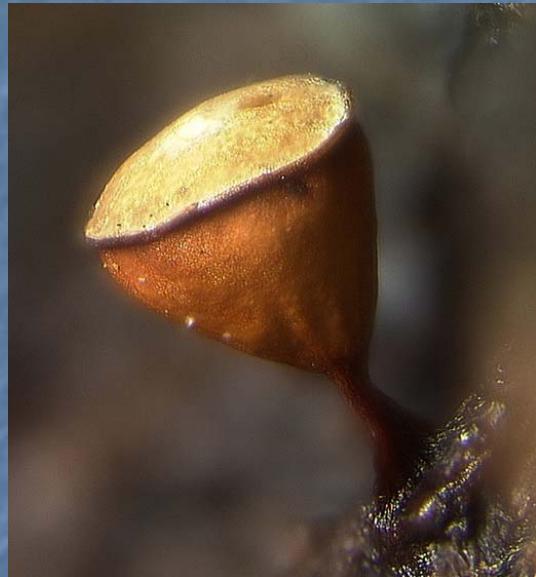
Tessellate: Having a surface marked with a mosaic design.



Tessellate peridium

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Truncate: Square or broad at the end as if cut off.



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Turbinate: Top-shaped.



Craterium aureum

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Umbilicate: Having a depression or invagination at the base of the spore mass where the stalk is attached.



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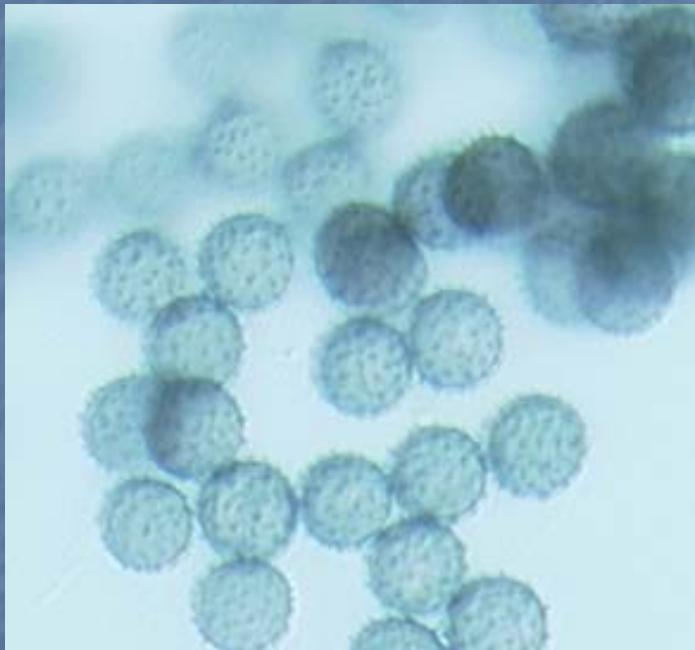
Venulose: Having small veins.



Venulose hypothallus of
Physarum pusillum

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Verrucose: Warted; having a surface marked with warts.



Cluster of verrucose spores
of *Badhamia nitens*

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Verruculose: Minutely verrucose; very delicately warted.

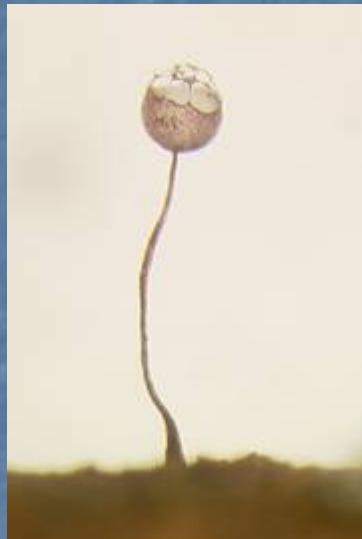


Verruculose spores of
Stemonitis fusca

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Violaceous: Bluish purple; the color of violets.

NOTE: Colors may vary depending on monitor calibration



Sporangium of
Cribaria violacea

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Warted: Having a surface marked with small protuberances or raised areas.



Warted spores of
Stemonitis fusca



Cluster of warted spores of
Badhamia nitens

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