



SOIL FUNGI

Fungi are microscopic organisms that usually grow into long threads or strands within the soil. These threads which are normally only a few micrometers in diameter are called hyphae, but a single hypha can be several metres long.

Some hyphae form a mass called mycelium or thick, string-like rhizomorphs that look like roots. Mushrooms are the 'fruit' of fungi. Mushrooms have special gills-like structures on which spores form. A single fungus can include many mushrooms across an area as large as a football pitch.



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Karl Ritz



500 µm

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Fungi perform important services related to water dynamics, nutrient cycling and disease. Along with bacteria, fungi are important decomposers in the soil food web. They convert hard-to-digest organic material into forms that other organisms can use. Fungal hyphae bind soil particles together to create stable aggregates that increase water infiltration and soil water holding capacity.