Fungi Encyclopedia Article

Fungi

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Fungi

Fungi are one of the five Phyla of organisms. Fungi are broadly characterized by cells that possess nuclei and rigid cell walls but lack chlorophyll. Fungal spores germinate and grow slender tube-like structures called *hyphae*, separated by cell walls called *septae*. The vegetative **biomass** of most fungi in **nature** consists of masses of hyphae, or *mycelia*. Most **species** of fungi inhabit **soil**, where they are active in the **decomposition** of organic matter. The biologically most complex fungi periodically form spore-producing fruiting structures, known as mushrooms. Some fungi occur in close associations, known as *mycorrhizae*, with the roots of many species of vascular plants. The plant benefits mostly through an enhancement of **nutrient** uptake, while the fungus benefits through access to metabolites. Certain fungi are also partners in the symbioses with algae known as **lichens**.

See Also

Fungicide