

Plant Poets' Corner – Talking to fungi

Fungi are not plants or animals, but part of their own kingdom. At Kew's Plant Poets' Corner, we are fascinated by the kingdom of fungi, which supports the lives of almost all plants on the planet.

Under the ground, fungi help plants communicate with each other through a 'fungal mycelium network', sometimes called the 'wood wide web'. In this writing exercise, we play with 'talking' to fungi through poetry.

Write a fungi poem in three steps

What would you like to learn from fungi?
What would you want to ask them?

1. Write a list to answer these questions.

You might ask, 'How do you help trees communicate? Or, 'What is it like to be so huge?' (The largest fungus is four square miles and found in the USA.) Your questions could be about touch, taste, smell.

To help choose your questions, you may wish to do a little bit of research using one of the links on page two, but it is not essential.

2. Underline or highlight your favourite questions or statements on your list.

3. Write a short poem. Use your favourite lines.

You might address your poem to fungi or speak to a particular type of fungi, or you might talk about fungi or as fungi. Your poem might become questions and responses. It is up to you.

I want to learn

to reach across the earth,
to speak to all parts of myself
and live humongously
among the roots.

The important thing with a first draft poem is not to judge it. Write it, find something you like in it, play with it if you want to. Then leave it for a bit. You might want to show it to someone else, you might not. We love receiving poems at Kew and will reply when we can: communitylearning@kew.org

Some poems on fungi for inspiration

- 'Fungi' by Tamar Yoseloff
- 'Mushrooms' by Sylvia Plath
- 'A poem about mushrooms' by Richard Osmond
- 'Black Mushrooms' by Henri Cole

Learn more about fungi from Kew

-  **Look:** Pictures from fungi-spotting season
-  **Watch:** Kew's fungi videos on YouTube
-  **Read:** The wonderful world of fungi
-  **Listen:** Unearthed Podcast: episode 4 on fungi
-  **Discover:** Data and resources on fungi
-  **Learn with children:** Learning at home (includes lots on fungi)

All facts included in this resource are taken from the sources listed in the box above. Created for Kew by poet Miriam Nash.

For more information on Kew, visit kew.org

