



Mushrooms are grown in tiers in a temperature and humidity controlled buildings. Here Fons Blommestein, the owner of Triple



Mushrooms can double in size every 24 hours, and as the bigger ones are harvested, new ones crowd up to take their place.

A Mushrooms in Gormley, inspects the current crop.

Want mushrooms, just sow wheat

By ANNEGRET LAMURE
To grow radishes, you sow radish seeds. To grow carrots, you plant carrot seeds. So it would seem reasonable to suppose that to grow mushrooms, you plant mushroom seeds, right? Wrong!

To plant mushrooms, you sow wheat. Of course this comes as no surprise to those of us who regularly sow out a patch of beans in the spring and end up with a fine crop of thistles in the fall, but it does amaze a lot of people.

However, Fons Blommestein (better known as the mushroom man) maintains that there is nothing miraculous about growing mushrooms from wheat.

"The mycelium is grown on wheat grains," he says, "so that what you really do is sow wheat on the beds to plant the mycelium." Simple. But what is mycelium?

Fons, who has been

growing mushrooms for more than 20 years and now runs Triple A Mushrooms in Gormley, took me into one of the long dark buildings and removed a board. Revealed there was a shelf which appeared to hold a 10 inch layer of mouldy hay. He pointed to the white fuzz which filled every space between the stalks from top to bottom. "That's mycelium."

Fons explains that when a spore germinates, mycelium results, and that the mushrooms will sprout up from that.

However, he was quick to point out that the worst thing that can happen on a mushroom farm is to let the crop go to spore.

Instead, to ensure uniformity and as perfect a mushroom as possible, mycelium is grown from the tissue culture of perfect mushrooms. One of the mediums used to grow the culture is wheat, and this is planted on prepared beds.

Preparing the planting beds is a whole science in itself since the care taken here will determine the final crop. "You have to feed them," said Fons.

He uses a mixture of horse manure, hay and corn cobs supplemented with fresh chicken manure, bruised grain and soybean meal to provide sound nutrition. The hay and corn cobs provide carbon, which heats up the soil, the grain and soy meal supply protein, and the manure is a good source of nitrogen.

This nourishing mixture is left outside for 14 days to compost and is then piled eight inches high on shelves inside the growing sheds. Later the mix is pasteurized by pumping hot steam into the buildings.

"This kills insects, pests and harmful fungi," explained Fons.

After pasteurization, the beds are heated to 125 degree fahrenheit for 10 days. This promotes the growth of bacteria. "Mushrooms are not like other plants, they don't grow on chemicals," Fons commented, "they grow on microbial protein, the bodies of bacteria. The higher the population of bacteria, the better your crop."

The whole thing sounds rather smelly and unappetizing, but in reality is neither. The cool air inside the

building smells mostly of earth and mushrooms and the mushrooms rise clean and white out of the damp soil.

"If a mushroom farm stinks, they don't do their composting right," maintains Fons.

After the composting pasteurization and warming of the growing beds, or mycelium, or mushroom spawn is sown on top.

It takes about two weeks for the mycelium to penetrate right through the compost, and at the end of that time, an inch of topsoil is put on top of the beds. This prompts the formation of mushrooms and if the temperature is somewhere around 60 degrees and the humidity is high, it is not uncommon to see the mushrooms doubling in size every day.

Fons figures he harvests roughly three pounds of mushrooms per square foot, three times a year. Since he has about 20,000 square feet of growing space under production at one time,

Left scene of accident

UXBRIDGE — A Scarborough man has been arrested and charged with failing to remain following a four vehicle accident on Highway 47, one mile east of the Stouffville town line.

The accident occurred Tuesday night at 9:05. Norman Bichener,

Destroy photos — group

BOWMANVILLE — A demonstration at the site of the proposed Darlington Nuclear Generating Station has turned into a controversy over pictures taken at the demonstration.

A spokesman for the

Greenpeace Foundation, has asked that the photos, taken by police and Ontario Hydro, be destroyed in the presence of the demonstrators.

John Bennett said protests have been lodged with Ontario Ombudsman Arthur Maloney, the Ontario Police Commission, Ontario Provincial Police,

Durham Regional Police, the Ontario Solicitor-general's office and Ontario Hydro for what he called indiscriminate photographing of demonstrators who were not breaking any laws.

Twelve persons were arrested at the site and

charged with trespassing. Mr. Bennett said the demonstrators were not opposed to police photographing those under arrest but the type of surveillance by plainclothes OPP and Durham intelligence officers inhibited ordinary law-abiding citizens from making their political views known publicly.

He said Ken Young, superintendent of Durham Regional Police, confirmed that two intelligence officers took pictures on the site although the forcer doesn't have jurisdiction in that area until next January.

Thieves get \$2,000 from shop

Police are investigating a break-in at the Country Fair, 61 Main St., Mount Albert on the night of September 30-October 1, which netted thieves about \$2,000 in goods.

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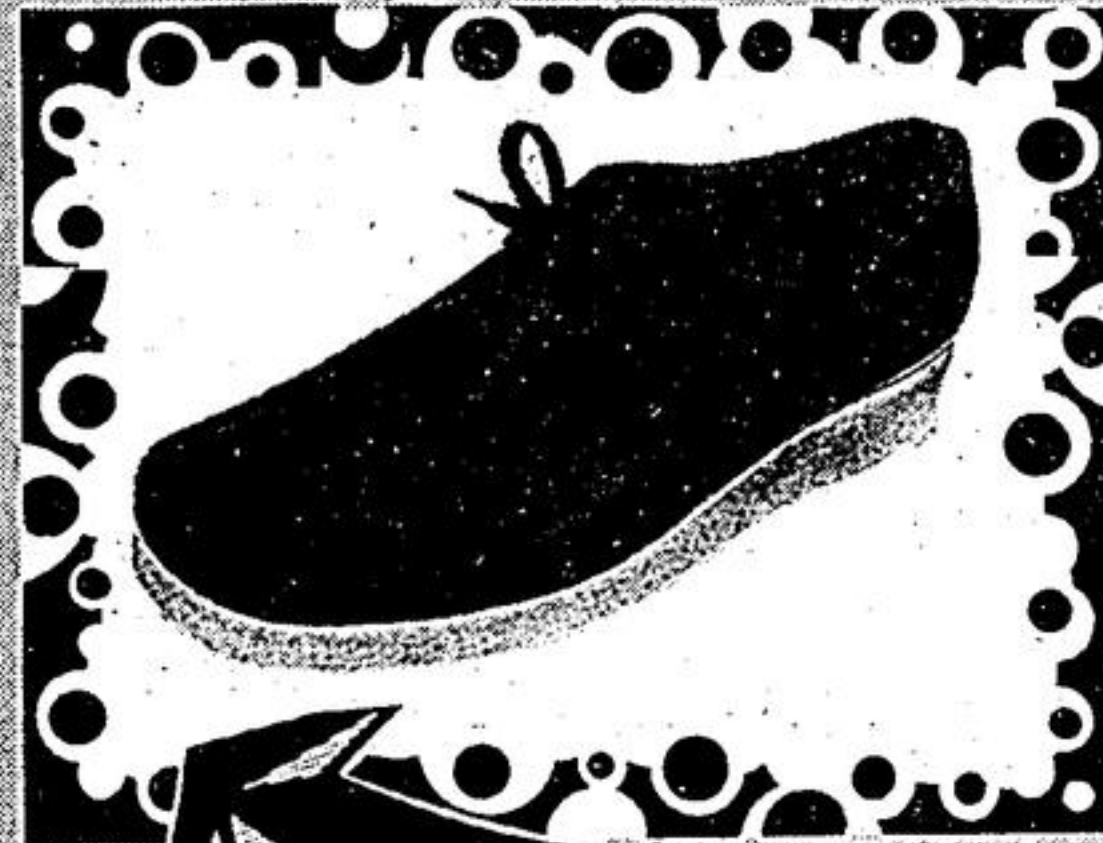
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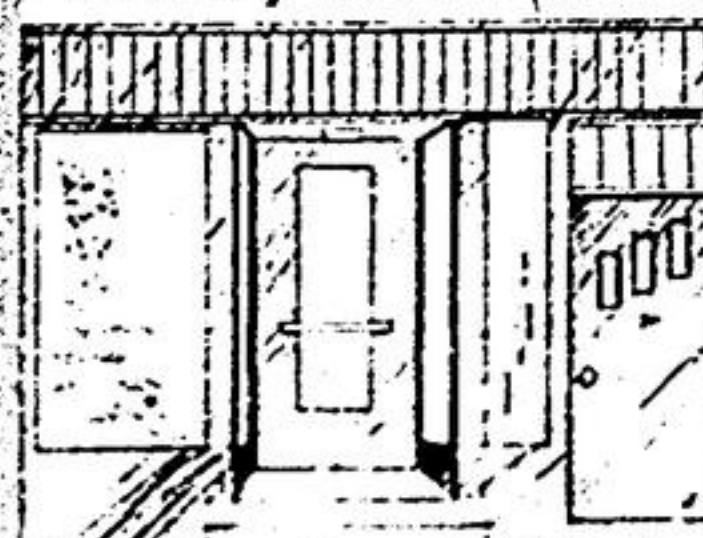
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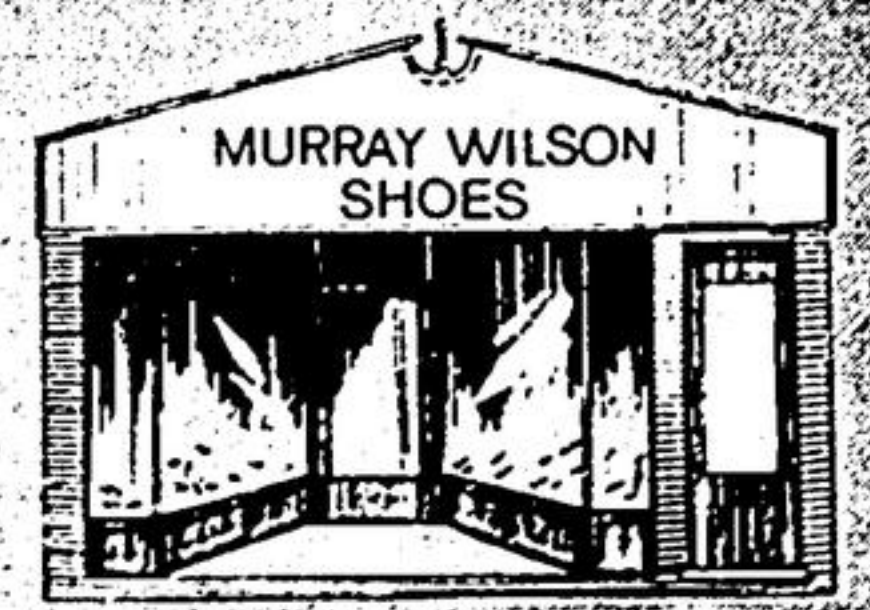


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