

## Book Review

**Armillaria Root Rot: Biology and Control of Honey Fungus.** Edited by Roland T.V. Fox. – Intercept, Andover (England). 222 pp. 2000. ISBN 1-898298-64-5.

The agaric genus *Armillaria* belongs to the most popular study objects among higher fungi, and not without reason. The species belonging to this genus have a wide distribution in the world, many are important pathogens of woody plants and some are used as food or medicine. Moreover, interesting and unusual characteristics have been found in the structure and life cycle of *Armillaria*.

In northern Europe we have only two commonly occurring *Armillaria* species. From human point of view they are relatively friendly creatures, causing only minor problems (if any) in forests and gardens. The situation is different in those parts of Europe where the more aggressive species *A. ostoyae* and *A. mellea* are common. These beautiful mushrooms can cause great harm, and good advice would be valuable for a gardener or forest owner in his battle against them.

The book edited by Dr. Roland Fox is a useful collection of review articles on *Armillaria*. It is the result of cooperation among ten authors. However, approximately half of the text is written by the editor who is working as a lecturer at the School of Plant Sciences of the University of Reading, U.K. The book consists of eleven chapters which deal with the biology, taxonomy, species identification, ecology, pathology and control. A major part of the book is dedicated to infection biology and control measures. In particular, the damages by *A. mellea* in English gardens are thoroughly presented.

A great number of studies on *Armillaria* is reviewed. A problem in this book is that several chapters overlap with each other. Consequently, some topics are presented repeatedly. A more careful planning and coordination might have resulted in more condensed and clear presentation.

I did not observe many errors. A strange error on p. 15 claims that on the basidium “there may be two, three, or five sterigmata, not four”. In actual fact, the most common number is four, as it is also presented in Fig. 4.1.

One interesting and unique property of *Armillaria* is presented only with a couple of inaccurate sentences (on p. 24). I mean the diploidy and the unusual nuclear cycles of *Armillaria* species. There certainly has been some occasional debate on whether the diploidy of the vegetative stage truly exists in *Armillaria*, but at present it has been proved in so many ways that there hardly seems any reason to doubt its existence.

Otherwise the book covers well the present knowledge on *Armillaria* and is a very useful handbook and guide to deeper studies for all who are interested in *Armillaria*. The general appearance of the book is handy and pleasant. Unfortunately, many black-and-white photos are of poor quality.

– And how to prevent the damages caused by *Armillaria*? The book gives useful advice but effective control on infected sites is far from easy. In 1985, P. Schütt stated that “the knowledge on *Armillaria* has greatly increased since the time of Hartig but little advancement has taken place in the control methods”. The control is difficult, so difficult that (as the editor describes in the Foreword of the book) some people have considered it best to give up the battle and instead of producing fruits and berries in their orchard just collect and eat *Armillaria* mushrooms.

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