

Growing Shiitake Mushrooms is Easier Than You Think

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Did you know that shiitakes are easy to grow in the home garden? Well they are and they only require a few items beyond the spawn (seeds). But before you jump into the fungus business, there are a few things you will need to know.

1. Shiitakes will produce 6 to 18 months after inoculation and will continue to produce for four to six years.
2. Any hardwood will work. This includes chestnut, sugar maple, beech, alder, and gum but their favorite is oak. When harvesting the wood, one will need to cut branches and/or trees that are disease free and six to eight inches in diameter. To make handling the logs easier, keep the length of the logs between four to six feet. Timing of the wood harvest is also important. Only cut the wood after the leaves have fallen in the fall and before the tree begins to bud out in the spring.

Once you have your wood source and it is cut, it is time to order your spawn (seed). Shiitakes have three strains that are weather based. These are the cold weather, warm weather, and wide range. Your spawn supplier can help you pick the appropriate strain for your area.



When your spawn arrives, it will be little dowels that are impregnated with the shiitake spawn. Prior to inoculating your logs, they will need to be refrigerated for 24 hours.

After the 24 hours have lapsed, it is time to process your logs. For each dowel that you have, you will need to drill a hole that is the same diameter and length of that dowel. Once the holes have been drilled, it is time to add the dowels. This is done by pushing a dowel into a freshly drilled hole and then gently hammering it in with a hammer until the dowel is flush with the log.

Next, you will need to brush off the excess sawdust and seal the dowel with a mixture of four parts paraffin to one petroleum jelly. This mixture will need to be melted together but not boiling. Once this has happened, seal the dowel with a layer of this mixture using a paint brush.

Continue with the above process until all of the spawn is used.

Now, move the inoculated logs to an area that is close to a water source and that is covered in 60 to 80 percent shade. Make sure to stack them up off the ground to keep the logs from being contaminated with other fungus.

The last part of this process is the hardest and that is the wait for these delicious mushrooms.
