



Making Plug Spawn to Grow Mushroom Logs

Growing mushrooms on logs is a satisfying and sustainable way to cultivate your own fungi. Start by choosing hardwood logs that were cut within the last 4-6 weeks, while they're still fresh and moist enough to support mushroom growth. This also helps prevent other fungi from taking over the log. A storm-fallen tree? Perfect! Repurpose it and give it a new life through mushroom cultivation.

Choosing Your Logs Not all wood is the same when it comes to growing mushrooms.

Hardwood varieties like oak, maple, and elm are prime real estate for most mushrooms, while softwoods like pine are less common choices. If you've got a tree on your property, you can reverse the process—choose a mushroom variety that will thrive on that wood. It's a beautiful example of letting nature decide the match!



What You'll Need:

Mushroom Spawn Plugs

You can buy pre-made plugs from various suppliers or create your own with liquid mushroom culture, rice, and hardwood dowels. If you order them, time it so they arrive when your logs are within the 4-6 week window of freshness.

Drill Bit

You'll need a bit slightly larger than your plugs. A $\frac{5}{8}$ "x1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " drill bit should work well. The idea is for the plugs to fit snugly into the log without scraping off the mycelium but not so loose that they wiggle around.

Beeswax or Cheesewax

Melt your wax and use it to seal the plugs once they're in the log. This retains moisture and keeps pests out, giving the mycelium a chance to colonize the log. Paraffin works, but I personally love beeswax—it's natural, sustainable, and smells wonderful while you work.





Making Your Own Mushroom Plug Spawn

If you have a pressure cooker, you're golden! But if not, no worries—I've got a stovetop method that works like a charm.

Using a Pressure Cooker

1. **Soak Hardwood Dowels:** Let your dowels soak in water overnight.
2. **Fill the Jar:** Put the dowels in a quart-sized mason jar, fill halfway with water, and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of brown rice. Leave about 2 inches of space.
3. **Pressure Cook:** Drill a small hole in the jar lid, cover it with bandage tape, and pressure cook at 15 psi (250°F) for an hour.
4. **Inoculate:** Once cooled, drain the extra water, add 1ml of liquid mushroom culture, and let it sit. Shake the jar occasionally as the mycelium begins to grow to speed things up. Your plugs are ready when fully covered in white mycelium.

Stovetop Method

(If you don't have a pressure cooker, this method works great!)

1. **Soak & Boil:** Soak the dowels overnight, then boil them in a large pot for two hours.



2. **Prepare the Bag:** Cook $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of brown rice, then place the dowels and rice in a quart-sized freezer bag, squeeze out the air, and let it cool.
 3. **Inoculate:** Once cooled, add 1ml of liquid mushroom culture to the bag, seal it with bandage tape, and let it sit until the dowels are fully colonized with white mycelium. This usually takes 3-4 weeks. If colonization is slow, shake the bag to help spread the mycelium more evenly.
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Setting Up Your Mushroom Logs

1. **Drill Holes:** Once your plug spawn is ready, drill holes about $\frac{1}{4}$ " deeper than your plugs and space them a few inches apart on your log.
 2. **Insert Plugs:** Tap the plugs gently into the holes, using a hammer if needed.
 3. **Seal with Wax:** Melt your wax and pour it over each plug to lock in moisture and keep pests at bay. If you're outdoors and not near a heat source, keep a candle in a mason jar burning while you drill, so you have melted wax ready when needed.
 4. **Position Your Logs:** Store your logs in a shady, undisturbed spot. Feel free to get creative with stacking or positioning your logs in your space. Sometimes a fallen tree can be transformed into a mushroom log right where it lands!
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Patience is Key

Mushroom logs can take anywhere from one to three years to produce mushrooms, depending on the variety. Faster growers like oyster mushrooms might show up sooner, while varieties like shiitake require more time. If your logs aren't producing, try soaking them in water overnight or giving them a few firm taps with a hammer to encourage growth.

Harvesting Your Mushrooms

Before harvesting, double-check that the mushrooms growing are the ones you intended to cultivate. Once you're sure, cut them all at once. If you find yourself with a surplus, consider freezing, dehydrating, or canning your harvest for later use. After harvesting, give your logs a good soak to prep them for their next flush.

Want More Tips?

Check out my [chart on selecting the right type of mushroom for your wood and timeline!](#)