

Basket Stinkhorn *Clathrus ruber* P. Micheli ex Pers. in Worcestershire

Caroline Copson, Mike Goodger, John Bingham.



01. Basket Stinkhorn fungus in a Worcester garden. November 2023. Caroline Copson.

The Basket Stinkhorn or Lattice Fungus or Red Cage *Clathrus ruber* P. Micheli ex Pers. is a rare fungus in the UK with just 160 records on the NBN, mostly along the south coast and typically found on woodchip or enriched soils. The striking red cage emerges from a dingy white ‘egg’ growing up to 12cm high by 9cm wide (Stery & Hughes 2009). It is possibly native, but more probably an old introduced alien, and when mature its smell is “repulsive, foetid” (Buczacki et al 2012). Basket Stinkhorn was first recorded in the UK in 1844 on the Isle of Wight, and as far as Worcestershire is concerned, it is very rare indeed. There are no records for the county found on the NBN Gateway or the Fungus Conservation Trust Database or on the British Mycological Society’s Fungal Records Database. Fungi tend not to get well recorded and this species can be confused with the equally rare Devil’s Fingers *Clathrus archeri*. The first record of Basket Stinkhorn in Worcestershire came from Kenneth Barham at Broadwas Court, in the summer of 2000, where it was found growing near to a Yew tree. More recently two other reports have been received and passed to us by Wendy Carter from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. In early November 2023 Caroline Copson looked out of her window in Worcester and saw what she thought was one of her dog’s toys in the garden, but one she didn’t quite recognise. She went outside to take a closer look, but soon realised that she couldn’t get too close because this pink ‘alien’ was living up to its pungent name and was indeed the rare Basket Stinkhorn.

Then in June 2024 Mike Goodger saw a small, pink, crown-shaped structure sitting on a flower bed in his Upton upon Severn garden. He thought it was a bit of wind-blown rubbish, and one or two flies were showing an interest in it. Mike picked it up, feeling a slight resistance, and saw that he had pulled up something living from its damp-slime-lined nest in the ground (02). It smelt unpleasant so he quickly put it down again. Unaware that it was a Basket Stinkhorn fungus *Clathrus ruber*, he picked it up on the end of a long screwdriver and dropped it in the rubbish bin just before it was collected, “giving it little time to escape”.



02. Basket Stinkhorn fungus pulled from a garden in Upton upon Severn. June 2024. Mike Goodger.

References

- Buczacki S, Shields C & Ovenden D. 2012. Collins Fungi Guide, HarperCollins Publishers, London.
 Sterry P. & Hughes B. 2009. Collins Complete Guide to British Mushrooms and Toadstools. HarperCollins Publishers, London.
 NBN Gateway. Available at:
<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0001477725#overview>
 [Accessed 24.06.24]
 Fungus Conservation Trust website. Available at:
<https://www.fungustrust.org.uk/page/cate2-database/6/>
 [Accessed 24.06.24]
 British Mycological Society - Fungal Records Database.
 Available at: <https://www.frdbi.org.uk/> [Accessed 24.06.24]

Images

01. Basket Stinkhorn fungus in a Worcester garden. November 2023. Caroline Copson.
 02. Basket Stinkhorn fungus pulled from a garden in Upton upon Severn. June 2024. Mike Goodger.