

Species of the Month 10/2018 || Bridal Veil Stinkhorn

31 October 2018 || TO NUS Community

NUS Students Against Violation of the Earth (SAVE) and the Office of Environmental Sustainability present “Campus in a Tropical Rainforest”, an initiative that aims to create awareness of the biodiversity that surrounds us in NUS. In each monthly issue, we will be featuring a species that can be spotted or found in NUS to help us get to know them better. So, if you happen to be travelling around campus between classes, remember to stop and look around your surroundings, for you may be surprised to come across some of the other inhabitants of NUS.

NUSSAVE PRESENTS:

Campus In a Tropical Rainforest

SPECIES OF THE MONTH

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Photo by: Shawn Ng

Bridal Veil Stinkhorn
Species: *Phallus indusiatus*
Family: Phallaceae



Appearance

The bridal veil stinkhorn is characterised by a pitted and ridged bell-shaped cap at the tip of the stalk, which may induce a mild case of tryphophobia. The cap is covered in a spore-containing slime called the gleba. It can be easily spotted by its hard-to-miss “lacy skirt”, known as the indusium.

But if your eyes fail you, fret not. Just follow your nose! The gleba produces a truly wonderful fragrance that boasts an explosive scent of dead and rotting flesh. The smell of death, rot and decay acts as a powerful seductive fragrance to attract flies and other insects to assist in spore dispersal.



Habitat

It thrives in damp, dark areas within the tropical forests and gardens of southern Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas.

In Singapore, the spores are very common and widespread. However, not every spore survives and develops into the structure we often see without the aid of a microscope: the fruiting body.

This fungus is saprobic, which means that it obtains nutrients by breaking down dead organic matter. In NUS, well-shaded spots rich in decomposing wood or loose soil, especially the ground shaded by Simpon Air plants along Kent Ridge Road, are ideal for the fruiting bodies of the bridal veil stinkhorn, especially just after intense downpour.



Fun Facts

During a state banquet held for American diplomat Henry Kissinger on his visit to China to re-establish diplomatic relations in the early 1970s, the bridal veil stinkhorn was used as one of the ingredients. It was described as having “a fine and tender texture, fragrant, and is attractive, beautiful in shape, fresh and crispy in taste.” Back in ancient times, the fungus was considered as sacred and had been used in divinatory ceremonies or in the making of charms.

Additionally, the bridal veil stinkhorn has been found to possess antibacterial properties as adding it to soup broth prevented spoilage for several days. According to traditional Chinese medicine, the fungus helps to lower cholesterol levels and clear clogged arteries.

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Check out other sightings of NUS biodiversity on the Campus Creatures Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/campuscreatures/>

You can also join the community in spotting the flora and fauna in NUS by sharing your sightings with pictures on the Campus Creatures Facebook page and Instagram the photos with #NUSCiTR and #NUSbiodiversity.