

WILD MUSHROOM SPECIES IDENTIFICATION IN THE WET ZONE WITH REFERENCE TO HOME GARDENS AMBAGAMUWA DS DIVISION IN NUWARAELIYA, SRI LANKA

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Mushrooms are organisms that belong to the Kingdom of Fungi. Fungi some of which produce fruiting bodies called mushrooms and they exist in many different forms. Wild Mushrooms have been composed and consumed by people for thousands of years. The archaeological records disclose that edible species have been associated with people living almost 13,000 years ago in Chile but it is in China where the eating of wild fungi or mushroom is first consistently pointed out several hundred years before the birth of Christ. The objectives of the study were identification of major wild mushroom types and their varieties in Home Gardens according to their shape and characteristics, recognition of their habitats and categorization of edible wild mushrooms. Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. Observation was the main data collection method followed for this study. Three plots were selected as No. 01, 02 and 03 (10m x 10m) at selected home gardens in the Wet Zone. Three plots had different types of environmental conditions of waste water drainage, garbage with shaded trees (No. 01), vegetable and betel cultivation area (No. 02) flower garden, fruits and ginger cultivation (No. 03). Time schedule was prepared per day and seven days were used for observation. Internet reading resources and articles were used to identify edible and nonedible mushroom varieties based on their descriptions with photographic documents. Results were shown as 45s wild mushroom varieties were identified in the Wet Zone home gardens under the main types of Veli hathu – Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostratus*) 7%, Piduru Hathu –Straw Mushroom (*Volvariella volvacea*) 15%, Jely Hathu – Jelli fungi (*Tremella cf.fuciformis*) 12%, Kotan Hathu (*Trametes versicolour*) 15%, Kandan Hathu (*Trametes versicolour*) 24%, Len Hathu (*Schizophyllum commune*) 5%, Alu bimmal 5% and 17% Unknown Mushrooms. Different shapes and colors were identified among mushrooms. Soil layer with humus, dry leaf layers, old dead or dying trees, old dead tree branches, living trees and huge dead tree logs or stalks are the main habitats for wet zone wild mushrooms. There are some edible mushroom varieties and those indirectly have an effect on the food security in the Wet Zone home gardens. Old dead tree branches are the most abound habitats for wild mushroom in the Wet Zone home gardens. 1cm-15cm is the height range of all types. Different shapes were identified among mushrooms. Rich mushroom collections can be seen during the day time with light sunshine after a heavy rain in the previous day. Wet Zone home gardens are ideal places for growing wild mushrooms and they can enrich the eco system with the support of appropriate climatic conditions.

Keywords: Wild mushrooms, Home gardens, Fungi, Habitat, Wet Zone