

Fistulina spiculifera — beefsteak fungus

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Fistulina spiculifera, or beefsteak fungus, is a common fungus that fruits on living or dead jarrah trees. Hoof-shaped brackets develop on trees and stumps in the autumn. The fungus produces a very slow decay in the heartwood of jarrah trees resulting in a condition known as ‘pencilling’—thin, black streaky lines within the wood.

Brackets grow up to 12cm diameter, are hoof-shaped and have a firm texture. Young specimens are purple red then mature to a liver brown colour (*inset above*) with well-defined radial wrinkles on the upper surface. Cutting or slicing the fruit body reveals a firm juicy marbled flesh (*inset above*), which gave rise to the common name, beefsteak fungus.

The aboriginal name for *Fistulina spiculifera* is “numar”. Note the two fungus flies, *Tapeigaster* sp., on the lower surface. Fungus flies lay their eggs in fungal fruit bodies and their larvae feed and develop within them.

The scientific name refers to the structure of the pore layer on the underside which resembles small pipes stacked together. *Fistul*:- tube or pipe, *-ina*: resembling. What *spiculifera* refers to for this fungus isn’t clear. *Spiculum*: dart, arrow or sharp point, *fero*:- to carry or bear.