

Peziza tenacella — purple cups

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Peziza tenacella, purple cup fungus, is a reasonably common fungus found in autumn following summer bushfires in karri and jarrah forest as well as other recently burnt woodlands and coastal habitats. It's easily recognised by its distinctive cup-shaped fruit bodies and is rarely found on ground that has not been recently burnt.

Cups may be up to 2cm in diameter, deep purple and smooth on the inside and white with a pimpled surface on the outside. They may be found as single fruit bodies or in groups of up to 12 or more.

There are a number of cup- and disc-shaped fungi that are only found on recently burnt bush or woodland soil. They are commonly known as pyrophilous, or fire-loving, fungi and seem to prefer the alkaline soil conditions that prevail immediately after fire. *Peziza preatervisa* is a similar fungus, also found after fire, but is distinguished from *Peziza tenacella* by its variable, brown to violet, colour and flatter-shaped fruit bodies (*inset above*). Pyrophilous fungi are most prevalent in the first autumn after fire and are only found in low numbers for the following year or two. Generally they don't appear again until after the next bushfire.

The scientific name refers to it having no stem and to its resilience (likely due to its ability to fruit after fire). *Peziza*: ancient term for a mushroom with little or no stem, *tenac-*: tenacious, *-ella*: small or diminutive.