



Anthracobia muelleri

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Anthracobia muelleri is a tiny disc-shaped fungus that fruits prolifically on burnt soil in the autumn following summer bushfires in most regions of southern Australia.

Discs are circular, 2–5mm diameter, but densely crowded and often distorted, dull to bright orange in colour with a fringe of short dark hairs around the margin. The underside of the discs is the same colour as the upper surface and generally has only a rudimentary stem or no visible stem at all.

There are a number of other species of *Anthracobia*, but they are difficult to distinguish from *Anthracobia muelleri* which appears to be the most common species. Anthracobias are also similar to species of *Pulvinula* which are common on recently burnt sites as well. *Pulvinula archeri* (see inset) also fruits prolifically and ranges in colour from dull to bright orange, but the margin is smooth, not decorated with hairs. These and other pyrophilous (fire-loving) fungi prolific in the first autumn after bushfires, but their numbers diminish rapidly over the following 2–3 years, then finally disappear—not returning until after the next fire.

The scientific name relates to its post-fire habit and also honours Baron Ferdinand von Mueller (1825-1896) who was appointed Government Botanist for the colony of Victoria in 1853 and director of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens from 1857-73. *Anthrac-*: coal or charcoal, *-ia*: pertaining to, *muelleri*: after Baron von Mueller. Similarly *Pulvinula archeri* likely refers to the ash resulting from fire and also in honour of Tasmanian botanist, architect and politician William Archer (1820-1874). *Pulver-*: powder or dust, *-ula*: pertaining to or may denote lesser degree of development, *archerii*: after Archer.