



For a while I have seen indoor [mushroom growing kits](#) in catalogs and have wished to try one. Each year I'd put them on the original order form and unavoidably, as I totalled the list, it was more than I needed to spend, and the mushroom kit was scratched. This winter I made up my mind to order one kit simply to give it a try. It was only \$15.95, so why not?

My first mistake was letting the boxes sit on my desk for weeks. After I opened them up and read the instructions, I was advised to start straight away. I thought I may have screwed the entire project up, but I made a decision to give it a try. I had 2 oyster mushroom kits, one blue oyster mushroom and a shiitake kit.

The kits came with detailed instructions and something looking like a tiny log, about seven inches high and five inches across, covered in plastic. There also was a 6-inch square sponge and a plastic sleeve. The log is left in its bag, and I was instructed to chop an "X" about 1 inch wide and deep in the log thru the plastic. A saucer is filled with about a half-inch of water, and then the sponge is set in the water. The log is placed upright on the sponge and covered with the clear plastic sleeve to keep humidity. Then the waiting starts.

In only a few days, I was stunned to find that one of the kits had grown full-sized mushrooms. They were so giant, the log toppled off the mantel. I harvested them and threw them into a pan of hot olive oil for approximately three minutes. I was not as successful with the blue oysters. I got some smaller ones, but I am going to start again. The shiitakes take longer and have a different culture for growing, but I am anticipating trying them next. The great thing about the kits is they will give the first flush of mushrooms and then two more after that.

The log is left to rest for two weeks, and then it's rehydrate, and the process starts all over again. Once the log is exhausted it can be composted or split up and added to potting soil as a natural manure.

I've had such a laugh growing (and eating) these mushrooms that I am going to try the organization's outside plugs. They're wooden dowels that are inoculated with mushroom mycelium. Fresh logs are drilled with five, 16-inch holes, and the plugs are inserted in the holes that are then sealed with wax. It takes anywhere from half a year to a year before they start creating, and the logs can be cropped up to 4 years. The logs can produce up to four pounds of mushrooms over their lifetime. Growing mushrooms is the ideal thing for the exasperated winter gardener and a great project for children.