**ASK FLORA – Soil Fungus**

**Sage & Snow Garden Club**

**February 2019**

Yes, fungus is among us and it is a good thing, at least in our soil! I was talking with a friend, Gardener Joe, recently and he revealed the world of mycorrhizal soil fungi to me. Here is some of the general information he shared. By the way, he promised we could talk again about how soil fungus affects us here locally, with our unique soils and plants. Stay tuned!

Dear Flora,

Usually I am trying to rid my home of fungus, so is it really a good thing to have fungus in my soil and, if so, why?

Signed,

Fred Spore

Dear Fred,

Yes, we need mycorrhizal fungi. Along with arthropods, nematodes, bacteria, and protozoa, fungi make soil productive. Mycorrhizal fungi are so named because of the structures that they make to reach out from the plant to gather nutrients, such as phosphorous, carbon, water, and nitrogen and moisture. In return, the fungus receives sugar from the plant. Healthier plants better resist environmental stresses such as drought, chilling, and pollution, and have an improved capacity to survive certain bacterial and fungal pathogen attacks.

Dear Flora,

What are some examples of how important mycorrhizal fungi are?

Signed, Rusty Smith

Dear Rusty,

In many parts of the world, food is in short supply and crops need every advantage they can get to survive and flourish, so mycorrhizal fungi are added to fields to enhance plant productivity instead of fertizilers. The fungus stimulates plant growth, thus reducing fertilizer requirements, and acts as an extension of plant roots to gather nutrients for the plant, thus optimizing a larger area of soil. If a soil is low in phosphorus, fungi will branch and extend further and if soil is too high in phosphorus, fungal growth will be inhibited.

Dear Flora,

How can I learn more about fungi in soil?

Signed, Evert Questioning

Dear Evert,

There are many youtube videos on this topic. Gardener Joe will be back to talk to the Sage and Snow Garden Club on this subject again, so watch for that notice. The Garden Club usually meets the third Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be 5pm, March 19th at the Sublette County Weed and Pest Office at 12 S Bench Road, south of Pinedale. The educational topic will be house plants. Everyone is welcome. The website [www.sageandsnow.org](http://www.sageandsnow.org) also has all Ask Flora articles and the yearly event calendar, including the August Garden Tour!