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Abstract

Developing an online database of descriptions of ectomycorrhizae

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Ectomycorrhizae are the mutually beneficial symbioses of fungi and fine roots, and are responsible for the uptake of nutrients that support tree growth. Many species of fungi form ectomycorrhizae with conifers; most are Basidiomycetes or Ascomycetes that form large mushrooms found in forests. It is, therefore, important to investigate how forest management practices affect the health, growth patterns, physiological function, and taxonomic diversity of ectomycorrhizae. Identification of ectomycorrhizae is fundamental to such research.

To date, several hundred detailed descriptions of ectomycorrhizae have been published in books, journal articles, and on a compact disk database called *DEEMY* (*DEtermination of EctoMYcorrhizae*), but hundreds more are unavailable in researchers' private databases. The *Database of Descriptions of Ectomycorrhizae* (*DDE*) web site aims to be a comprehensive tool for the identification of ectomycorrhizae by bringing together as many published and unpublished descriptions as possible. A search function, available to all users, has been programmed to act as an electronic synoptic key. The *DDE* system also allows qualified researchers to add their unpublished descriptions to the database, and to update these descriptions as needed. The *DDE* database currently contains 338 descriptions; 318 from *DEEMY* and 20 from *A Manual of Concise Descriptions of Ectomycorrhizae* (*CDE*). Entry of descriptions and search profiles is done using a web form with all the characters in the *CDE* checklist and links to the *CDE* illustrated glossary.

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