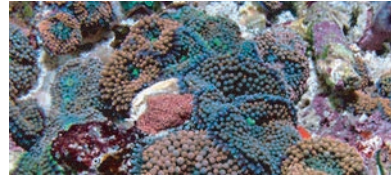




Mellow Mushrooms



Mushroom corals are very unique creatures. Most of these animals are smaller than a CD, and some are as small as a quarter. They come in many colors: orange, purple, blue, pink, red, green and all the combinations in between. Mushrooms also can be bumpy, smooth, striped or frilly.



Related to anemones, most mushrooms have symbiotic algae that live inside them and provide them some food. They will also collect tiny bits of food in the mucus that covers their bodies and will eat that for dinner. Unlike anemones, they do not have long tentacles, but some have tentacles that they will use to keep other corals from getting too close.

A Mushroom for You

Mushrooms can be a very cool and colorful addition to a reef tank. They are not as picky about light, and they will grow on just about anything. These cool little animals can give your tank a little character and lots of color.

When they are scared, or not eating, the mushrooms will close up into small little bubbles. This protects them from predators. Although they are sometimes the prey, they can also be the predators. The biggest mushrooms can be 1 foot across and can eat small fish!

Mushrooms are very important for coral reefs. They are tougher than hard corals and are not hurt by pollution as easily. They will cover dead coral and recolonize areas that have been damaged. These little animals can be very important and pretty darn cool.



Try This!

Make Yummy Coral Mushrooms at Home!

What you will need:
pancake mix
chocolate chips
powdered sugar
blueberry jam
your parent's help



Mix up pancake mix and have your parents cook as normal. For colorful "mushrooms" add food coloring to the mix. To make a bumpy "mushroom" add chocolate chips to one side. To make a striped "mushroom" add stripes of jam to the top. When your pancakes are done, pile them creatively to make a colony of "mushroom corals".

