

## COLUMNS

# Campbell Vaughn: Hurricane Helene could be the reason you're seeing more mushrooms

**Campbell Vaughn** Augusta Chronicle

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### Key Points AI-assisted summary

Mushrooms appearing in lawns are often harmless fungi feeding on decaying matter like old tree roots.

These fungi typically emerge after rain follows a dry spell, triggering their reproductive cycle.

Red spider lilies, also known as naked ladies, are perennial bulbs that bloom in late summer or early fall.

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I had mentioned recently that lawn fungus had been common this summer, with me seeing a lot of grey leaf spot around town, and large patch fungus will be prevalent in the next few weeks. Now we are seeing different types of mushrooms steadily popping up.

I have heard from lots of folks lately that “my yard has fungus because I am seeing mushrooms throughout the lawn”. Well, technically, you do have a fungus, but it isn’t one doing any harm. It is a group of mushrooms that feeds on the copious amounts of dead roots under the ground left by [Hurricane Helene](#).

Mushrooms usually emerge when rain follows extended dry periods, which we are in right now. Dry weather stresses the fungi, and when water becomes available, it triggers the reproductive mechanism, and mushrooms emerge.

The mushroom caps are the fruiting bodies of the fungi. These types of fungi are most common on hardwood bark mulches, wood chips, and lawns where trees have

been removed.

When trees are removed, much of their root system is left behind to decay. These rotting roots provide an ample source of nutrition for mushrooms.

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Most of the mushrooms that are on the lawn are completely harmless to the yard and will go away with a little time. If you prefer these nuisance fungi gone immediately, mowing, kicking, and golf swing practice are all acceptable methods of removal.

A few people over the years have asked me the question, “Can I eat the mushrooms growing in my yard? I might just sauté them in a pan.” My response is beyond consistent. “No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Did you hear me?” I said “no.” Let me repeat it once more, NO.

I love eating mushrooms, but unless you are an expert at fungi identification, please don’t eat the mushrooms in your yard. You may find one that is the most delicious treat ever, but the chances of getting an urban forage gem are slim. It is more likely that the yard mushroom you choose to make a meal out of will make you wish you had shopped at Publix.

Mushrooms can be very poisonous and can kill you. And I won’t positively ID one for you because I don’t want to risk the chance of me getting it wrong, you eating it, and your fungi forage ruins your whole weekend by you dying or wishing you had.

**Campbell Vaughn:** [Fall is nearly here, so follow this to-do list to keep your lawns looking good](#)

My buddy Rob from Estell, South Carolina, texted me the other evening asking to identify a flower he said was the prettiest one he had ever seen. I told him to make sure he picked it and give it to his wife because he seems to stay in the doghouse, and it would make a nice gift. The plant is one that I love mentioning because this time of year, they randomly pop up out of nowhere and really are incredible.

The plant is called red spider lily (*Lycoris radiata*), which is a late summer or early fall blooming perennial bulb in the amaryllis family. The name spider lily comes from the filaments (a part of the male pollen-bearing flower structure) growing longer than the petals, which give it a tarantula effect or maybe reminiscent of daddy-long-leg spider legs.

They are also called naked ladies because they come up as stalks with no leaves at all, just a flower head. I had one randomly pop up in a flower bed in my yard this past week. What a treat.

With a hardiness zone from 5b-10, these bulbs grow best in rich, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. After the red spider flowers fade, the leaves emerge from the ground not too long after and are evergreen during the winter, and die when we hit some hot weather in late spring. Make sure to keep the leaves on the lilies throughout the winter season so the bulb can get sunlight to feed the plant.

If you want to share the bulbs, divide them in the spring when the leaf foliage turns yellow. A lot of plant retailers will keep them in stock during the season, but they tend to sell out quickly. I have seen them in the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Market Bulletin on occasion.

These crazy red flowers never cease to amaze me. Enjoy them now because they don't last long.

