



DeKay's brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*) is generally found in urban areas of the Eastern side of North and Central America, but can also be found frequenting wetlands, grasslands, and forests. Their ideal habitat is moist, where they are able to find prey: earthworms, slugs, and snails. These snakes may be of least concern for conservation, but they are still an important part of their ecosystem in not only controlling the numbers of such creatures, but also being a food source to larger snakes, toads, frogs, birds, and mammals.

The *Trametes Betulina* or Gilled Polypore can be found developing small to medium semicircular caps on dead wood. These white and extremely tough and corky mushrooms are inedible, but research suggests that they have many medicinal purposes, even anticancer properties. Even though they are from the polyporales family, these fungi have gills instead of pores.



This beautiful fall attraction is The Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*) for its brilliant red colors in fall! However, don't let its beauty fool you, this plant is originally from Russia, Japan, China, and Korea, and is considered an INVASIVE species in certain states. Although this plant is very attractive to birds and other wildlife, this is perhaps its downfall—such creatures will quickly disperse countless seeds. When these little shrubs take root, they are known for crowding out native shrubs and perennials! In order to control numbers, certain states have made this plant illegal, and it has become increasingly difficult to purchase one.



The Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a fascinating perennial native to America. It can be found in the East, South, and Midwest of the US. This plant flowers green to white, and forms berries that start red and turn black towards winter.

These berries are a food source to many songbirds, but are considered a pest to farmers because of their toxic nature. They are generally poisonous to humans, dogs, and livestock. However, their shoots and leaves can be edible IF they are cooked properly in spring and early summer. But they turn deadly in fall! Another fascinating use of this plant is that it was once used to make ink!

Lichens come in many different colors and appearances, many of which strongly resemble plants—but they are not plants! They are actually a composite organism, meaning that they are made up of two or more independent organisms. In the case of lichens, they are made up of an alga or a cyanobacterium partner and a fungus partner. However, they often times look very similar to plants, even appearing leafy or shrubby. This particular lichen has leaf-like structures, making it a foliose lichen. Lichen makes up an estimated 6-8% of earth's surface, proving itself as an important food source and part of earth's ecosystems.



Photos are original by Adeline Quinn

information sources:

<https://ultimate-mushroom.com/poisonous/163-trametes-betulina.html>

<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/786918-Trametes-betulina>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trametes_betulina

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euonymus_alatus

<https://www.brandywine.org/conservancy/blog/invasive-species-spotlight-burning-bush-euonymus-alatus>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DeKay%27s_brown_snake

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lichen>

<https://blog.education.nationalgeographic.org/2016/07/25/lichen-the-threesome/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phytolacca_americana