

Waxcap key - How to use

Decide whether the cap is dry or viscid (you need good fresh material), then choose a column.

Work down the left-hand column until you find the row which best suit describes the cap. Look at the box where the chosen column and row coincide. If there are several species listed in the box, select the number listed and refer to the short key listed below.

Note: this is a field-learning key and should not be used for critical determinations.

Description of Fungi	Stipe Viscid & Cap Viscid	Stipe Dry & Cap Viscid	Stipe Dry & Cap Dry
Cap turning black.	<i>conica</i>	<i>conica</i>	<i>conica</i>
Cap dark grey to black, gills & flesh reddening		<i>ovina</i>	<i>ovina</i>
Cap white		<i>virginus</i> 1 <i>russocoriacea</i>	<i>pratensis</i> 2 <i>fornicata</i>
Cap or stipe with at least some green	<i>psittacinus</i>		<i>citrinovirens</i>
Cap violet, lilac or blueish	<i>lilacina</i>	<i>calyptriformis</i>	<i>calyptriformis</i> 3 <i>lilacina</i> <i>viola</i>
Cap grey or blue-grey	<i>irrigata</i>	<i>fornicata</i> 4 <i>lacmus</i> <i>flavipes</i>	<i>fornicata</i> 5 <i>canescens</i> <i>nitrata</i>
Cap brown	<i>irrigata</i>	<i>ingrata</i> 6 <i>spadicea</i> <i>colemanniana</i>	<i>ingrata</i> 6 <i>spadicea</i>
Cap yellow & conical	<i>acutoconica</i>	<i>acutoconica</i>	<i>citrinovirens</i>
Cap yellow & convex	<i>chlorophana</i> 7 <i>vitellina</i> <i>glutinipes</i> <i>insipida</i> <i>citrinopallida</i> <i>xanthochroa</i>	<i>chlorophana</i> 8 <i>ceracea</i> <i>citrinopallida</i> <i>aurantiosplendens</i>	<i>turunda</i> 9 <i>citrinopallida</i> <i>xanthochroa</i> <i>quieta</i>
Cap orange & gills free, adnate or adnexed	<i>mucronella</i> 10 <i>insipida</i> <i>xanthochroa</i>	<i>aurantiosplendens</i> 11 <i>acutoconica</i>	<i>quieta</i> 12 <i>miniata</i> <i>calciphila</i> <i>substrangulata</i> <i>intermedia</i> <i>helobia</i> <i>reidii</i>
Cap orange & gills decurrent	<i>insipida</i> 13 <i>laetus</i> <i>xanthochroa</i>	<i>laetus</i>	<i>pratensis</i> 14 <i>turunda</i> <i>cantharellus</i>
Cap red & gills red	<i>glutinipes var rubra</i> 15	<i>coccinea</i> 16 <i>punicea</i>	<i>mucronella</i> 17 <i>splendidissima</i> <i>helobia</i> <i>miniata</i> <i>calciphila</i> <i>reidii</i> <i>coccinea</i>
Cap red & gills decurrent	<i>coccineocrenata</i> 18 <i>mucronella</i>		<i>cantharellus</i> 19 <i>coccineocrenata</i> <i>mucronella</i>

1. Strong smell of Russian leather or Cedar pencils	<i>russocoriacea</i>
Smell indistinct, mild coconut	<i>virginea</i>
2. Gills adnate or adnexed	<i>fornicata</i>
Gills decurrent	<i>pratensis var pallida</i>
3. Cap narrowly conical	<i>calyptriformis</i>
Cap convex or omphalinoid	A
A. Cap < 5 mm, omphalinoid, gills adnate	<i>viola</i>
Cap > 5 mm, convex, gills decurrent	<i>lilacina</i>
4. Gills adnate or adnexed	<i>fornicata</i>
Gills decurrent	A
A. Stipe base yellow	<i>flavipes</i>
Stipe base matches cap	<i>lacmus</i>
5. Gills decurrent, cap felty	<i>canescens</i>
Cap adnate or adnexed	A
A. Stipe white or cream.	<i>fornicata</i>
Stipe grey to fawn, smell nitrous.	<i>nitrata</i>
6. Gills yellow	<i>colemanniana</i>
Gills cream	<i>coccinea</i>
7. Gills adnexed or adnate	A
Gills sub-decurrent to decurrent	B
A. Stipe opaque, fungus robust	<i>chlorophana</i>
Stipe hyaline, fungus small	<i>gluttinipes</i>
B. Lamellae edge viscid	<i>vittelina</i>
Lamellae edge dry	C
C. Stipe red at least at the apex	<i>insipida</i>
Stipe orange, yellow or red	D
D. Stipe orange at least at the apex	<i>xanthochroa</i>
Stipe white or yellow at the apex	<i>citrinopallida</i>
8. Lamellae distinctly decurrent, stipe yellow or white	<i>citrinopallida</i>
Lamellae otherwise	A
A. Stipe fibrillose or pruinose at least at apex	<i>aurantiosplendens</i>
Stipe smooth	B
B. Stipe < 5 mm diameter	<i>ceracea</i>
Stipe > 5 mm diameter, often grooved	<i>chlorophana</i>
9. Cap yellow or orange with dark squamules	<i>turunda</i>
Cap smooth or finely pruinose	A
A. Fungus robust, stipe > 5 mm diameter	<i>quieta</i>
Fungus delicate, stipe < 3 mm diameter	B
B. Stipe violaceous at apex, spores 6-7.5 x 4-5 microns	<i>xanthochroa</i>
Stipe pale yellow or white, spores 8-10 x 4.5-5 microns	<i>citrinopallida</i>
10. Cap reddish-orange, taste bitter	<i>mucronella</i>
Cap yellowish-orange, taste neutral	A
A. Fungus robust, stipe > 5 mm diameter	<i>xanthochroa</i>
Stipe reddish, at least at the apex	<i>insipida</i>
11. Stipe smooth, lamellae adnate	<i>aurantiosplendens</i>
Stipe fibrillose, lamellae free or adnexed	<i>acutoconica</i>
12. Pileus squamules or tomentose	A
Pileus smooth	E

A. Lamellae free or adnexed, stipe fibrillose	<i>intermedia</i>
Lamellae adnate or decurrent	B
B. Cap bright red, fragile, smell of garlic	<i>helobia</i>
Cap orange or dull red, tough, no smell	C
C. Spores 9-12 microns long	<i>substrangulata</i>
Spores 7.5-9 microns long	D
D. Spores Triangular	<i>miniata</i>
Spores oblong	<i>calciphila</i>
E. Cap yellow, smell of <i>Lactarius quietus</i>	<i>quieta</i>
Cap orange to orange-red, smell of honey at least in stipe base	<i>reidii</i>

13. Lamellae edge viscid, stipe dull	<i>laetus</i>
Lamellae edge dry, stipe red or orange	A
A. Stipe red at least at apex	<i>insipida</i>
Stipe orange, hyaline, sometimes with violet	<i>xanthochroa</i>

14. Fungus robust, cap dull matt orange.	<i>pratensis</i>
Fungus small	A
A. Cap orange with dark squamules	<i>turunda</i>
Cap edge scalloped	<i>cantharellus</i>

15. Fungus brick red, cap convex	<i>psittacinus</i>
Fungus orange red, cap applanate	<i>glutinipes var rubra</i>

16. Fungus robust, stipe fibrillose	<i>punicea</i>
Fungus small, stipe smooth, lamellae red, at least at base	<i>coccinea</i>

17. Pileus squamulose	A
Pileus smooth or finely pruinose	C
A. Fungus scarlet, squamules pointed, faint smell of garlic	<i>helobia</i>
Fungus red, orange or yellow, squamules obtuse	B
B. Spores triangular	<i>miniata</i>
Spores oblong	<i>calciphila</i>
C. Taste bitter	<i>mucronella</i>
Taste neutral or mild	D
D. Fungus medium to large, bright red	<i>splendidissima</i>
Fungus small to medium, orange red	E
E. Lamellae yellow or orange, smell of honey in stipe base	<i>reidii</i>
Lamellae red with yellow edge, smell neutral	<i>coccinea</i>

18. Taste bitter	<i>mucronella</i>
Taste mild	<i>coccineocrenata</i>

19. Cap smooth, taste bitter	<i>mucronella</i>
Cap squamulose	A
A. Squamules concolourous with cap	<i>cantharellus</i>
Squamules distinctly dark	<i>coccineocrenata</i>

Patrick Leonard 1997; updated Liz Holden 2011; updated Chris Johnson 2022