

Aseroë rubra Labill., 1806

Description: A stipe topped by a radiating ring of tentacle-like, forked arms. Colour may range from the typical bright red to pink, reddish-orange, orange, to lemon yellow. White forms have also been found. The number of arms also varies greatly.



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Egg: Typically dingy white to grey in colour, but may be dark grey, pinkish, purplish or even brownish. To 30 mm in diameter with white rhizomorphs at the base. Gelatinous texture. The egg remnants are seen as a volva at the base of the mature fruiting body's stem, often semi-buried in the substrate.

Stipe: May be barely emerged from the egg or up to 80 mm long – usually to 60 mm, up to 30 mm in diameter, cylindrical or flaring towards the top. Hollow, smooth, but with a spongy surface and texture, dry. Usually the base of the stem is white, or with pinkish tints, and the colour deepens progressively upwards until the arms are reached. Wall is cellular in structure.

Disc: This is a flat diaphragm, up to 35 mm in diameter, which covers the top of the hollow stipe. It may be smooth or very coarsely wrinkled, it might be a complete disc, or it could have a hole in its centre. Its colour is variable, though it is usually red or pink. Sometimes it is covered by the gleba. The outer edge of the disc forms a thickened and spreading rim to the top of the stipe, from which the arms are attached.

Arms: 5-9, typically bright red, forked, radiating from the top of the stipe like the rays of a star, up to 40 mm long and 6 mm wide at the base, tapering towards the tips. Both upper and lower surfaces may be smooth or wrinkled. The arms are often twisted or curled and consist of a number of hollow chambers. Variation occurs in the colour, the number and breadth of the arms (some overseas *A. rubra* have up to 22 arms); the forks may taper to differing degrees, and the point of forking may be nearer to the stipe or to the tips. Some of the arms may remain fused together at their tips.

Gleba: Brown to olive-brown to black. Slimy texture, sometimes covering the disk or in blobs at the bases of the arms. Smell intensely foetid, of rotting meat or sewerage. If you touch this spore mass, the smell can linger on your hands for hours.

Spores: Rather variable in size: 3-7 x 1.5-3 µm, cylindric, smooth, hyaline or tinted.

Habitat: This species is common in the eastern half of Australia, growing in organically rich soils in rainforests and woody debris (rotting logs on forest floors) and often in well-mulched or wood-chipped garden beds, sometimes in large troops.

Notes: *Aseroë rubra* has the honour of being the first fungal record for Australia. It was collected on 1st May, 1792 on the shores of Recherche Bay, just south of Hobart, by the French naturalist Labillardière who was part of an expedition that was looking for the lost explorer, La Pérouse.