

Aseroe rubra



Aseroe rubra © Susan Nelles

Fruit body: comprises a central erect tube and 5–11 radiating arms; 50–80 mm diameter; the pink to bright red (rarely white) arms are joined in pairs at their bases, with long tapering, divided tips.

Stem: central, hollow column, 25–90 mm tall; spongy, dry, and whitish-pink. It emerges from a white, membranous sac (volva). The fungus starts underground as a firm, white jelly-like egg, which quickly ruptures, producing the mature fruit body, leaving the remnant egg as the basal volva.

Gleba (Spore mass): at maturity, brown, stinking slime on the upper surface of the bases of the arms and central disc.

Spores: subcylindric; $4.5\text{--}7 \times 1.7\text{--}2.5 \mu\text{m}$; smooth.

Substrate: organically rich soil, litter and mulch.

Habitat: forests, gardens and parklands.

Notes: this medium fungus looks like a brightly coloured red starfish on a spongy pink stem. It often grows in groups in mulch. This was the first fungus to be described in Australia in 1792. Other reddish stinkhorns with arms include *Lysurus* species. A similar white fungus, *Aseroe arachnoidea*, has been discovered in north Queensland. It has arms that are solitary (not paired at the base) and white.