



Contact:

Madison Donohue
Education and Culture Manager, Rural Action
Appalachian Understories
madison@ruralaction.org
330-546-3059

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2026

Fall Fungi Festival Returns to Appalachian Ohio for a Weekend of Mushrooms, Learning, and Community

ATHENS, Ohio — Mushroom enthusiasts, nature lovers, families, and curious beginners are invited to explore the fascinating world of fungi at the Fall Fungi Festival, taking place October 17–18 at Tenderfoot Learning Lab in Appalachian Ohio.

Hosted by Appalachian Understories, a program of Rural Action, the two-day, one-night festival celebrates the diversity of fungi found throughout Appalachian Ohio and offers opportunities for people of all experience levels to learn from local experts, explore the forest, and connect with one another.

The festival will feature guided mushroom hikes, hands-on workshops, fungus forays, family-friendly activities, educational programs, live music, camping, and opportunities to learn from mushroom experts and naturalists. Whether attendees are experienced foragers or have never learned to identify a mushroom, the festival is designed to be a welcoming place to explore fungi and deepen a sense of place in Appalachian Ohio.

Set within Tenderfoot Learning Lab’s mixed mesophytic forest, the festival provides an immersive setting for exploring the region’s fungal diversity. The property includes approximately three miles of hiking trails through a forest of pine, oak, poplar, red maple, sassafras, beech, hemlock, and sycamore.

“Fungi are an incredible way to deepen our connection to the places we live,” said Madison Donohue, Education and Culture Manager at Rural Action and coordinator of Appalachian Understories. “They invite us to slow down, look closely, and recognize how much is happening beneath our feet and all around us. The Fall Fungi Festival is really about creating a welcoming space where people can explore that world together.”

The festival also highlights the important ecological role fungi play in forest ecosystems. Fungi help break down organic matter, cycle nutrients, form relationships with plants, and support healthy forest communities. At the 2024 Fall Fungi Festival, participants documented 52 unique fungal species, offering a glimpse into the diversity that can be found in Appalachian Ohio forests.

“People often think of mushrooms as something you see on a hike, but fungi are connected to almost every aspect of a healthy forest,” said Donohue. “This festival gives people a chance to discover those connections while spending time outdoors and building community.”

Festival Details:

Fall Fungi Festival
October 17–18, 2026
Tenderfoot Learning Lab
9365 5 Points Rd, Athens, OH 45701

Festival parking will be located off-site, with signage directing attendees to the designated parking area. A free shuttle will operate during designated times throughout the weekend.

Tickets, festival information, and updates are available through Appalachian Understories’ [Fall Fungi Festival page](#).

About Appalachian Understories:

Appalachian Understories is a social enterprise within Rural Action’s Environmental Education program. Appalachian Understories celebrates the natural and cultural heritage of Appalachian Ohio through guided tours and community-centered outdoor experiences that provide a sense of place, preserve cultural knowledge, benefit human well-being, and stimulate the local economy. Learn more at www.appalachianunderstories.com.

About Rural Action:

Founded in 1991 and based in Appalachian Ohio, Rural Action is a membership-based nonprofit whose mission is to build a more just economy by developing the region’s assets in environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways. The organization works with members and partners across the region to grow local businesses and jobs, restore the environment, and connect the next generation of leaders to career pathways in sustainable agriculture, forestry, watershed restoration, and environmental education. Rural Action has a network of more than 600 members throughout Appalachian Ohio. For more information, visit www.ruralaction.org.