

*Trichaptum biforme* – Purple Tooth



At first glance, this might look like the Turkey Tail mushroom. If you look closely, you will notice the lilac color at the edge of these shelf fungi, identifying them as *Trichaptum biforme*. The edge will stay purple as long as the moisture is high and the mushroom is growing. Turn it over and you will see the loveliest purple-lilac color you can imagine. Unfortunately, the color fades with time until the spore surface is a buff-tan color with just a hint of purple. The common name for *Trichaptum biforme* is Purple Tooth. This is a misnomer, as this is not a toothed fungus, but is instead a polypore. The spore surface becomes rough with age until it appears to have spines or teeth, thus the common name of Purple Tooth.

Purple Tooth grows in overlapping clusters on stumps, logs, and small dead hardwood trees. If you find a cluster on conifer wood, it is a closely related species, *Trichaptum abietinum*. It is not unusual to find a

small tree completely covered with *Trichaptum bifforme*. This is one of the most commonly encountered fungi in North America, second only to *Schizophyllum commune*. It is so common, there is a parasitic fungi that only grows on Purple Tooth, and can be use to confirm the identity of the host. Next time you see a large cluster of Purple Tooth, look carefully for some tiny black “pins” in rows on the top surface. These Fairy Pins are *Phaeocalicium polyporaeum* and are just barely visible to the naked eye.

Purple Tooth and Fairy Pins are two of my favorite fungi – Purple Tooth for its gorgeous color, and Fairy Pins because they are common, but few people ever notice them.

Glen



*Phaeocalicium polyporaeum* on *Trichaptum bifforme*. Photos by Glen Schwartz