

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The First Flush Kit

A companion to The Beginner's Mushroom Growing Bible · by Forrest Bowen

Thanks for picking up the book. This is the companion you keep by the grow tub: which species to start with, a sterile-technique checklist, a contamination ID guide so you know friend from foe, and a grow log. Print it, keep it clean.

Growing mushrooms is mostly about one thing: keeping your stuff cleaner than the contaminants. Master that and the mushrooms practically grow themselves. — Forrest

Best Beginner Species — Start Here

Don't start with the finicky ones. These three are forgiving, fast, and delicious.

Species	Difficulty	Substrate	Time to first flush	Notes
Oyster (Pleurotus)	Easiest	Straw, coffee grounds, sawdust	2-4 weeks	Aggressive colonizer, fights off contam
Lion's Mane	Easy-medium	Hardwood sawdust/master's mix	3-5 weeks	Gourmet, fewer contaminants compete
Shiitake	Medium	Hardwood sawdust block	6-12 weeks	Slower but a great keeper

Start with oyster mushrooms. They colonize so fast and aggressively that they out-compete most contamination — which means they forgive the mistakes every beginner makes.

Legal note: this guide is strictly gourmet and medicinal culinary mushrooms — oyster, lion's mane, shiitake, king oyster, wine cap. Nothing else.

Sterile Technique Checklist

Contamination is the #1 reason grows fail. You don't need a lab — you need habits.

Before you work

- Wipe all surfaces with 70% isopropyl alcohol. Let it sit, don't just smear.
- Wash hands to the elbow; spray gloves with alcohol.
- Work in still air — a cracked-open tote (SAB: still air box) beats an open room.
- Have everything you need in arm's reach before you open anything sterile.

While you work

- Open sterile bags/jars for the shortest time possible.
- Flame or alcohol-wipe anything that touches the inside (scalpel, spawn).
- Never let your hands pass OVER an open sterile container.
- Talk less, breathe away — you're a contamination source too.

Golden rule

Work fast, work clean, work in still air. Contamination is opportunistic; give it no opening.

Contamination ID — Friend or Foe

Knowing what you're looking at saves grows (and prevents tossing good ones).

What you see	What it is	Action
White, fluffy, cobwebby spreading from spawn	Healthy mycelium	Good — keep going
White with a faint sweet/mushroom smell	Healthy	Good
Blue-green powder (like a moldy orange)	Trichoderma (green mold)	Toss — most common killer
Black/dark fuzzy patches	Black mold (Aspergillus etc.)	Toss — do not open indoors
Pink/orange slimy patches	Bacterial blotch / mold	Toss
Cobweb-like fast gray growth	Cobweb mold	Can sometimes treat; usually toss
Sour, rotten, or "wet sock" smell	Bacterial contamination	Toss

When in doubt, bag it sealed and remove it from your grow space before opening — never open a contaminated bag indoors near healthy grows.

Grow & Fruiting Log (photocopy per grow)

Field	Entry
Date / species	_____
Substrate & weight	_____
Spawn type & %	_____
Date inoculated	_____
Colonization — % at day 7 / 14	_____
Fully colonized date	_____
Introduced to fruiting (date)	_____
First pins seen	_____
First harvest / weight	_____
Contamination notes	_____

That's the kit. Start with a bag of oyster spawn and pasteurized straw — it's the most forgiving grow there is, and pulling your first flush off the side of a bag is a feeling you won't forget. When you do, I'd love to hear about it, and in a couple of emails I'll tell you how a quick word from you helps this book reach the next grower.

Stay clean, grow well,
Forrest Bowen