

Rare hissing mushroom spotted at Texas state park

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Chorioactis geaster. Credit: Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

For the second time this year, a rare hissing mushroom was spotted in

Texas at a state park in Hill Country.

Known as the Texas star mushroom, the [fungus](#) is highly selective about where it grows, according to the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. The mushroom tends to grow on decaying cedar elm stumps in North and Central Texas.

It has made appearances in more than a dozen Texas counties, including Dallas, Tarrant, Collin and Denton. It has also been spotted in Oklahoma and perhaps surprisingly, Japan, making it one of the world's rarest mushrooms.

Texas Parks and Wildlife shared photographs this week of the mushroom growing at Inks Lake State Park, about 70 miles northwest of Austin in Burnet County. The mushroom was last seen at the [park](#) in February.

"Don't tell anyone ... but the Texas Star Mushrooms (*Chorioactis geaster*) have been spotted in the park again," the department wrote on Facebook. "If you want to see one when you visit, ask at the headquarters when you check in."

The fungus typically appears in late fall as a fuzzy, dark brown capsule 3 to 4 inches in length. After rain, the mushroom explodes open, unfurling into a tawny-colored star that makes an audible hissing noise while puffing smoke. That has earned it the nickname "devil's cigar."

"That happens when the species explosively throws out its spores," scientist Forrest Mims III previously told the state's parks and wildlife magazine. "Because they're under such high pressure, the spores are released like bullets."

Only a few hundred people are likely to have ever seen the rare

mushroom, according to Bob O'Kennon, a research scientist with the Fort Worth-based Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

Thanks to its popularity and elusiveness, the fungus was designated the official state mushroom of Texas in 2021. That declaration described the mushroom's star shape "custom designed for the Lone Star landscape."

"A poignant reminder of the natural diversity that surrounds us, the Texas Star mushroom is as uncommon and striking as the state that serves as its home."

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