

woollen products, in particular the lung lichen of the hardwoods, locally known as "cocherel". Modern back-to-the-earthers have recently revived and greatly extended the art of extracting natural dyes from lichens.

On Prince Edward Island there are probably at least several hundred common species of lichen. These are often difficult to identify and distinguish; sometimes the lichen must be sectioned, examined under a dissecting microscope or treated with chemical tests in order to establish definite identification of species. An almost total lack of common names also tends to discourage the would-be lichen identifier. Nevertheless, using growth form as a basis, three broad groups of lichens can be fairly easily recognized.

Foliose or leaf-like lichens are flattened and prostrate with an upper surface that is different from the lower. They tend to grow outward from the centre and so become more or less round in outline. The body of these lichens consists of flattened lobes which vary in degree of wrinkling and ridging on the upper surface and in how closely the lower surface is appressed to the substrate. The foliose group includes many of the leaf-like lichens commonly found growing on tree bark and branches.



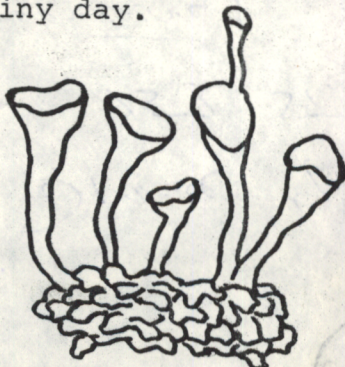
FRUTICOSE LICHEN

Fruticose lichens are shrubby or hair-like and are round in cross-section. They may hang down or stand erect. Typical of the hanging group are hairy growths sometimes seen suspended from tree branches or trunks; these are collectively referred to as old man's beard lichens. Erect fruticose lichens often grow on the ground, rocks, old tree stumps and fence posts. This group includes the red-capped British soldier lichens and the pixie-cup lichens.

Crustose or crust-like lichens are very firmly and completely attached to the substrate on which they grow. They often appear to be little more than a design on the surface of a rock or tree; hence the name script lichens applied to one group.

For the average lichen-watcher identification may not be a realistic aim, but a wealth of fascinating structural detail can be observed by examining lichens closely with the naked eye or a hand lens. Lichens boast a rich variety of reproductive structures which can often be seen on the surface of the plant. The fascinating array of colours and forms found among the lichens is a wonderful subject to challenge any photographer .

And even if you're not quite keen enough to get down to lichen-watching at the eye-to-eye level why not try to start watching out for them the next time you take a walk near your home or through the streets of downtown Charlottetown. Your walk will be the richer for it and you just might be surprised at the array of interesting and colourful lichen shapes you've never before noticed lurking on the tree trunks. And for an even nicer display try taking the same walk on a damp or rainy day.



PIXIE CUP LICHEN

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