

Predatory Fungi

Nematodes or roundworms are widespread and occur in all types of environment, often present in enormous numbers; reportedly a rotten orchard apple, on the ground, was infested with 90,000 roundworms. Algae and fungi are important food sources for many terrestrial species, but there is one group of fungi that feed on nematodes. About 50 species of nematode feeding fungi, mainly Zygomycetes and Deuteromycetes, hunt with a variety of methods, some species use undifferentiated hyphae that adhere to the nematode, others have special stalked adhesive knobs, while perhaps the most remarkable is *Arthrobotrys dactyloides*. This fungus uses a loop of hypha consisting of three curved cells at the end of a short stalk to form the closed loop. When a nematode enters the loop the ring cells rapidly, in about 0.1 sec, increase in size constricting and holding the nematode. Once caught, hyphae penetrate and digest the animal. A truly remarkable feat for so called 'delicate' hyphae!