

Source: The Outdoor Survival Handbook, Raymond Maers, 1993 edition. ISBN 0 - 312 - 09359 - 4

Cramp-balls (p 46) Hard black fungus, often on ash trees, excellent for fire-lighting by friction, or with sparks. When dry, will take a spark and smoulder.

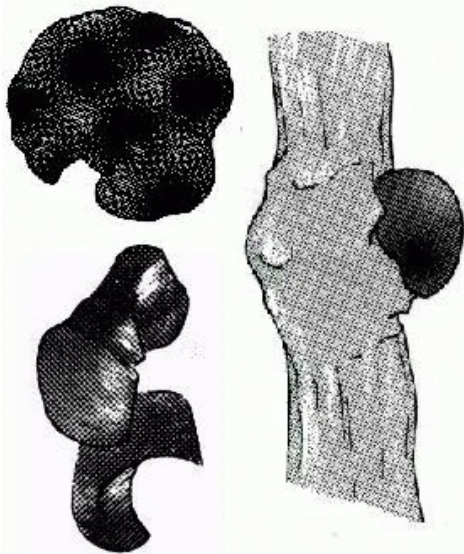
(From page 175) Cramp-ball. These tight, hard, brown - to black coloured fungi are found mainly on ash. Broken open they contain concentric rings. We have already come across them for use as tinder (see p. 46). Several of them set alight will make an excellent substitute for charcoal for broiling meat. Cramp - balls also dispel insects.



NATURAL TINDER, CHARCOAL, AND INSECT REPELLANT

I found what must be the described cramp - balls on a Birch Tree, here in North Carolina. Not to be confused with the similar looking "black - puff - ball - fungus" found on the ground.

(book illustrations)



(from the web)



From the web

Cramp Balls / King Alfred's Cakes (*Daldinia concentrica*) Also on Ash, this fungus lives on dead and dying material and is therefore what we term a saprophyte. It gets one of its names from the belief that if you keep one of these in your pocket, you will never suffer from cramps! Size anything up to 75 mm.

There is also a *Daldinia grandis*, or large variety, listed mostly in hot climates like California. The dead *Daldinia concentrica* I picked off the Birch tree were already dead, and dried out, it being winter.