

EVERGREEN FORUM FALL 2023

THE WEIRD WONDERFUL WORLD OF FUNGI

KAY WIDMER

Thursdays starting September 27 through November 2 for six sessions | 10:00 a.m. - noon
VIRTUAL | LECTURE/DISCUSSION | MAXIMUM 25

Overview

In this course, participants will read Merlin Sheldrake's *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures*. He explores the world of this massive kingdom and investigates the wide range of fungi, from the honey fungus, which covers miles underground, to the microscopic yeasts. The fungi are a key player in evolution, establishing communication between organisms in the soil and sustaining forests around the planet. Some are a scourge causing disease and blight, while others are used in medicines. Some questions he considers are:

- What experiments show fungi can learn and are intelligent? (How is intelligence defined in a brainless organism?)
- How do fungi manipulate the behavior of other organisms, including insects and humans?
- How have they created ecosystems and changed the course of evolution?
- How do they survive extremes such as volcanic hot springs and outer space? How do they collaborate with forest trees to create the Wood Wide Web?

In the article on Merlin Sheldrake in *The New York Times* of June 11, 2023, "The Miracle Beneath Our Feet- A vast web braids together life on Earth," Jennifer Kahn quotes Sheldrake on the interconnections of the Wood Wide Web, the fungi are "the ecological connective tissue, the living seam by which much of the world is stitched into relation". Merlin received his Ph.D. in tropical ecology from the University of Cambridge. His passion and delighted surprise at what he is learning and discovering during his research is eloquently expressed and makes a spellbinding read.

The course presentation will be on Zoom and include visuals, videos, and discussions.