

# Assembly Bill 261

## California State Mushroom: California Golden Chanterelle

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

### SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 261 would designate the California Golden Chanterelle (*Cantharellus californicus*) as the official state mushroom.

### BACKGROUND

For over a billion years, fungi have played an integral role in our ecosystem. For example, they capture the majority of terrestrial carbon and provide roughly 80% of the nutrients used in plant growth. Many species of fungi also form symbiotic relationships with plants, gathering at their roots to amplify their ability to collect nutrients.

Furthermore, fungi are very deeply intertwined with Californian history. For instance, Californian tribes have traditionally gathered at least 26 different species of mushrooms. They have used these mushrooms for many purposes, including food, medicine, pigments, polishing agents, and vessels for transporting fire.<sup>1</sup>

Fungi also have the potential to help counter the impacts of climate change and pollution. Aside from capturing carbon and supporting photosynthetic organisms, some fungi can perform mycoremediation, a process that breaks down and neutralizes a number of persistent environmental pollutants.<sup>2</sup> For example, experiments have shown that some species of fungi can remediate crude oil, allowing polluted soil to once again support plant life<sup>3</sup>. This and other research demonstrate that fungi could be a high-impact, natural solution to our pervasive pollution problem.

Therefore, it is not only appropriate, but pertinent, that the state of California celebrates its fungi by designating a state mushroom. An ideal candidate for this recognition would be the California Golden Chanterelle, a distinctly Californian mushroom that forms relationships with the oak trees living throughout the state. It's also a popular edible mushroom amongst

foragers, thereby enriching the experiences of the many Californians who wish to engage with their state's natural treasures.

This recognition would be in line with California's extensive history of recognizing important state symbols. At present, there are 41 state symbols, including 12 that acknowledge the unique and influential species that currently live in California. Many of these symbols have been designated through legislation, with the most recent instance being AB 1782 (Muratsuchi and Calderon, Statutes 2018), which established surfing as the state sport.

### SOLUTION

AB 261 would establish the California Golden Chanterelle as the official state mushroom, thereby marking it as a symbol of the prominent role fungi play in the state's ecosystem, history, and future. Designating an official state mushroom would also create opportunities for the public to learn about the state's rich biodiversity and the special functions fungi perform for the environment.

### SPONSOR

California Institute for Biodiversity

### CONTACT

Marissa Plante, Legislative Assistant  
[Marissa.Plante@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Marissa.Plante@asm.ca.gov)  
(916) 319-2025

<sup>1</sup> [California Indian Ethnomycology and Associated Forest Management \(bioone.org\)](https://bioone.org/)

<sup>2</sup> [Mushroom as a product and their role in mycoremediation - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/)

<sup>3</sup> [Bioremediation of a Crude Oil Polluted Soil with Pleurotus Pulmonarius and Glomus Mosseae Using Amaranthus Hybridus as a Test Plant \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/)