

The Air We Breathe

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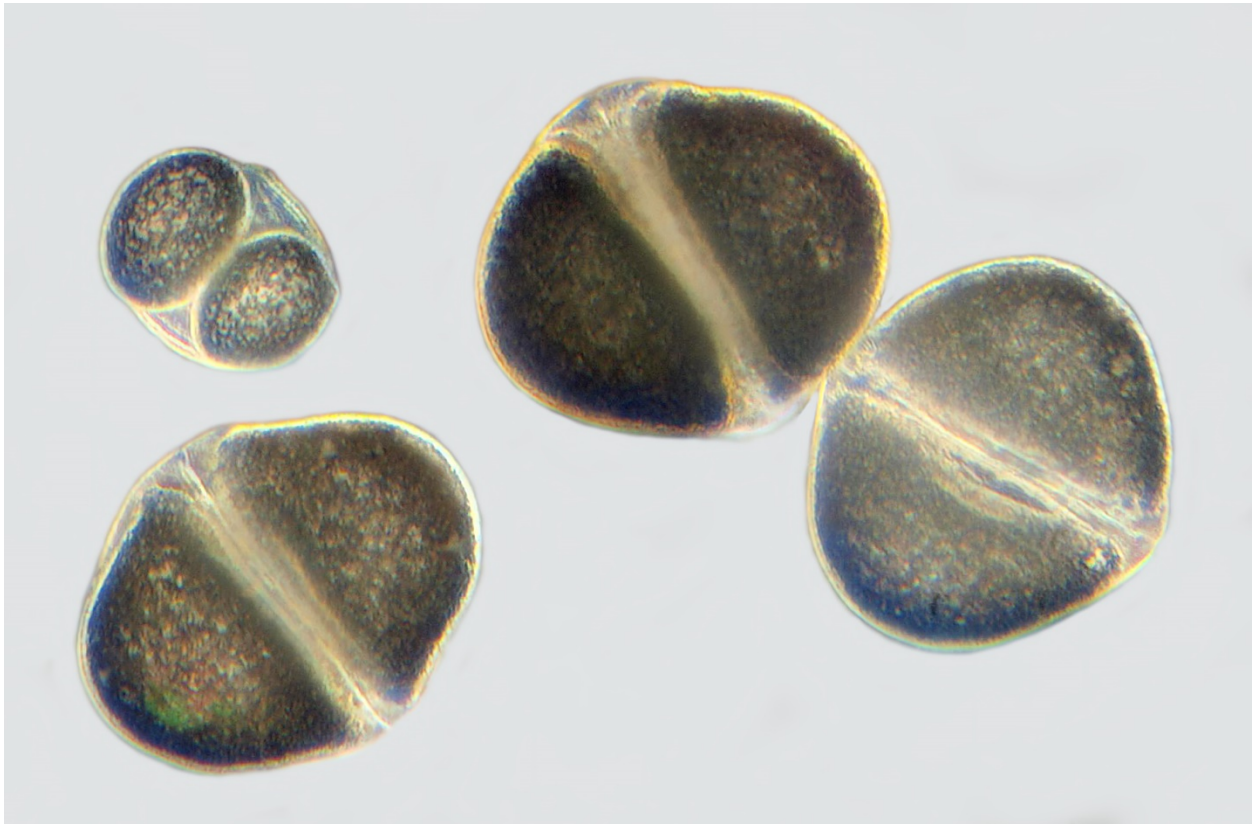
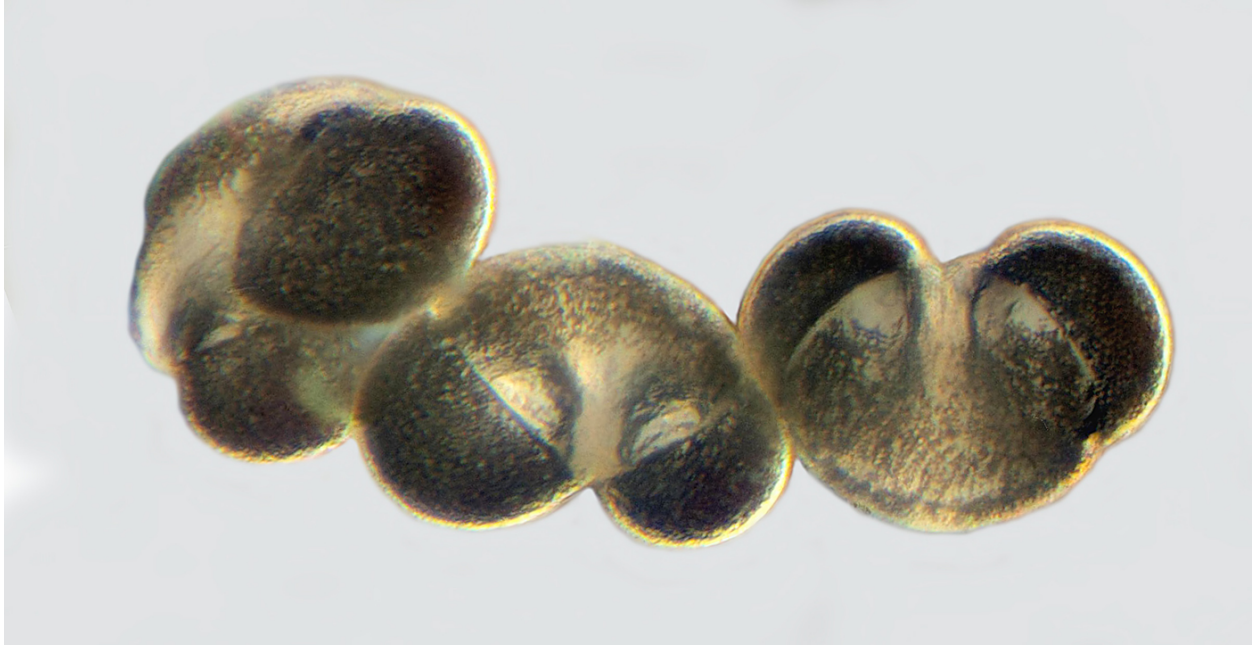
This past spring the pollen levels in our area were extremely high. Our autos and everything else outdoors was covered by a fine dusting of pollen. In our area there was a preponderance of pine pollen.

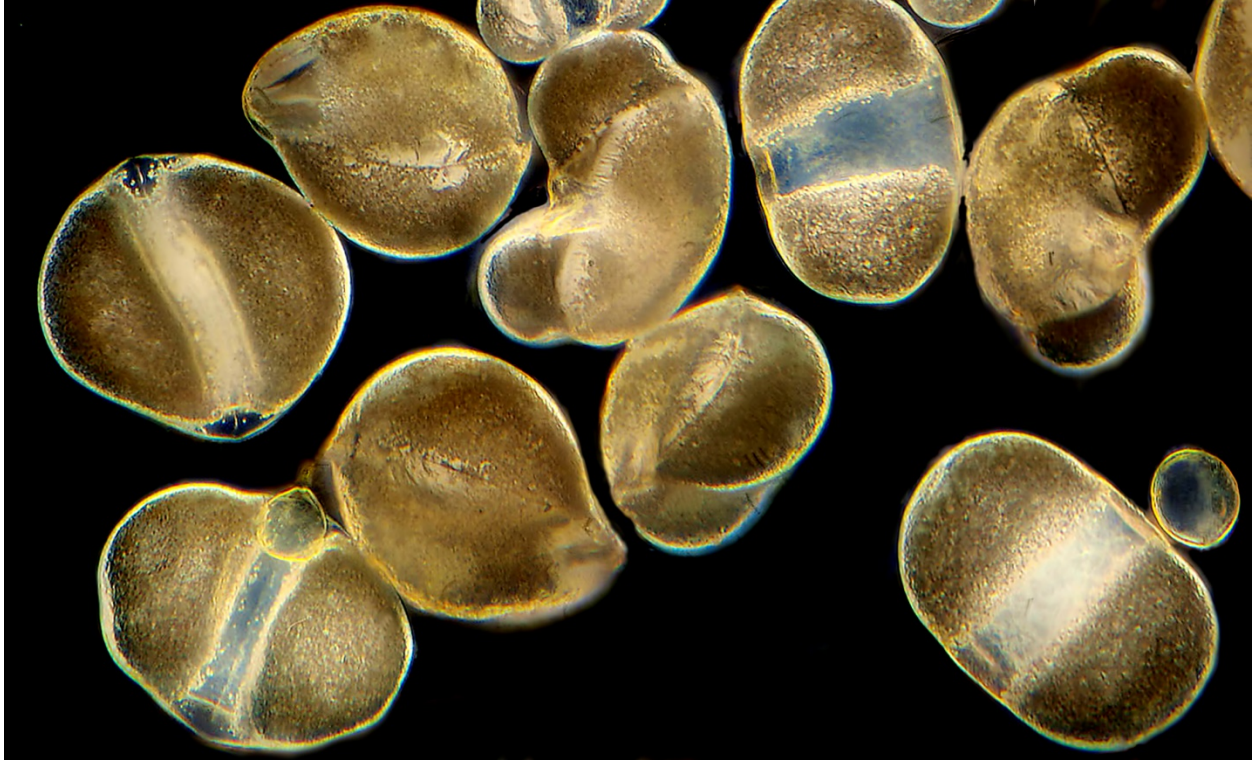


As an experiment, I placed three slides with a generous smear of glycerin outdoors for 24, 48 and 72 hours to see what I could capture from the air wafting over them. The beauty of glycerin is that it does not readily dry out and that a cover slip can easily be pressed onto it for microscopy.

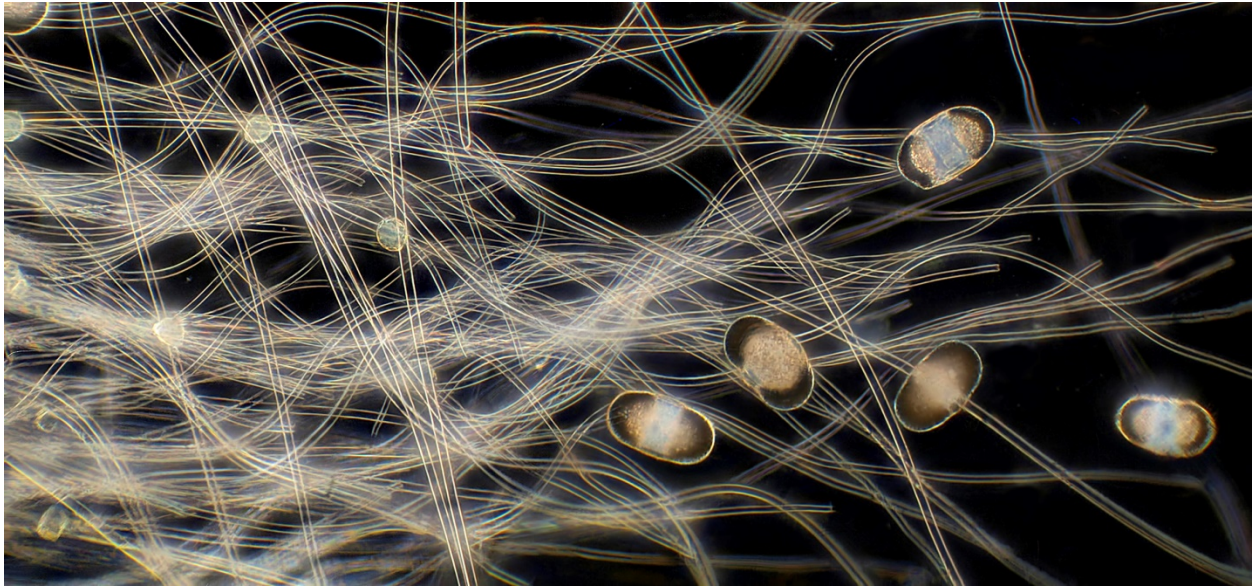
When each slide was brought in, it was necessary to pick off the larger chunks and insects before applying the cover slip. The revelation of this experiment was to show what we inhale every day and what the cilia in our breathing passages patiently churn upward into what is scientifically known as *boogers* and *snot*.

The yellow pollen is predominantly pine pollen.



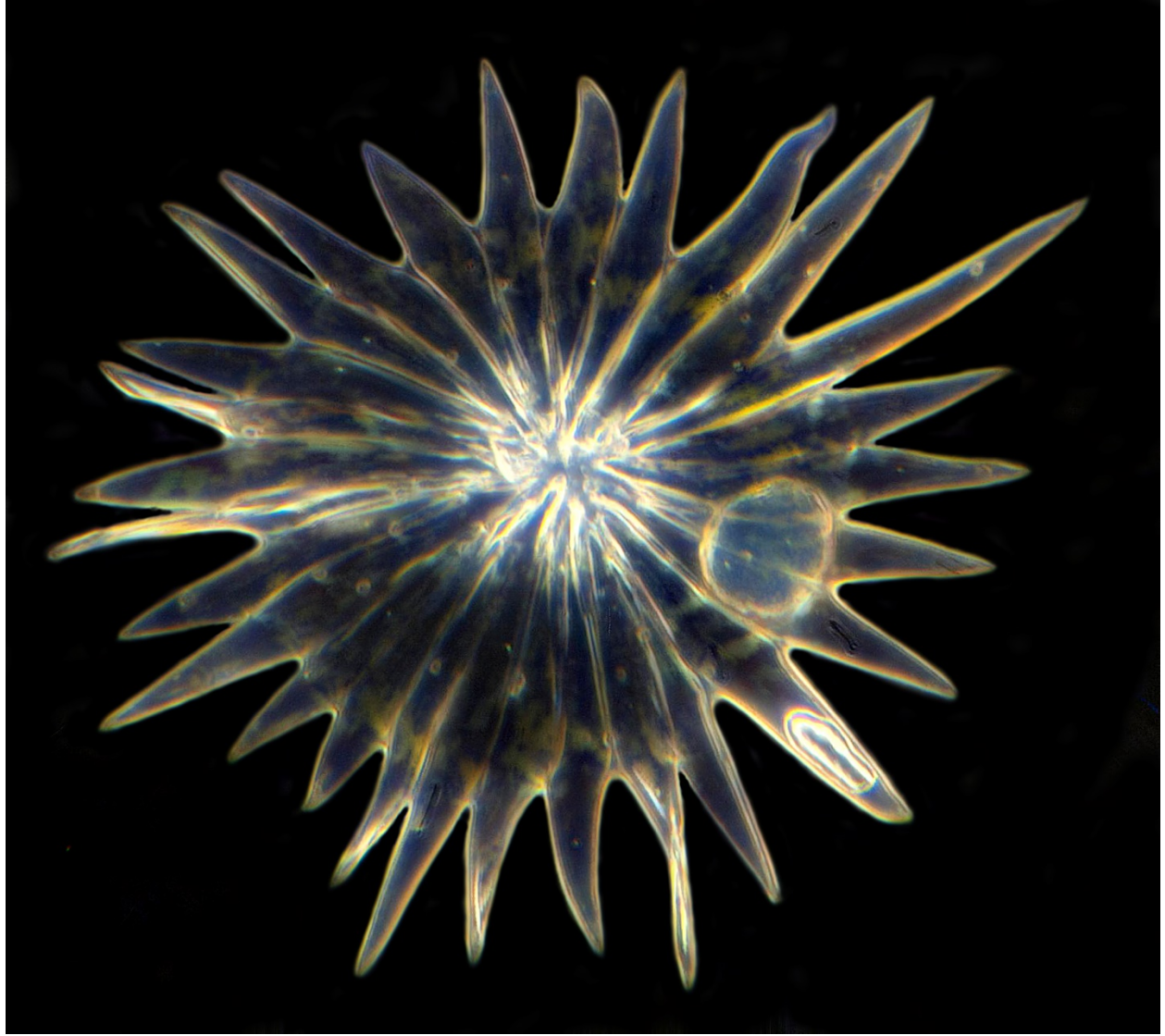


A fungal spore landed on one of the slides and took off.

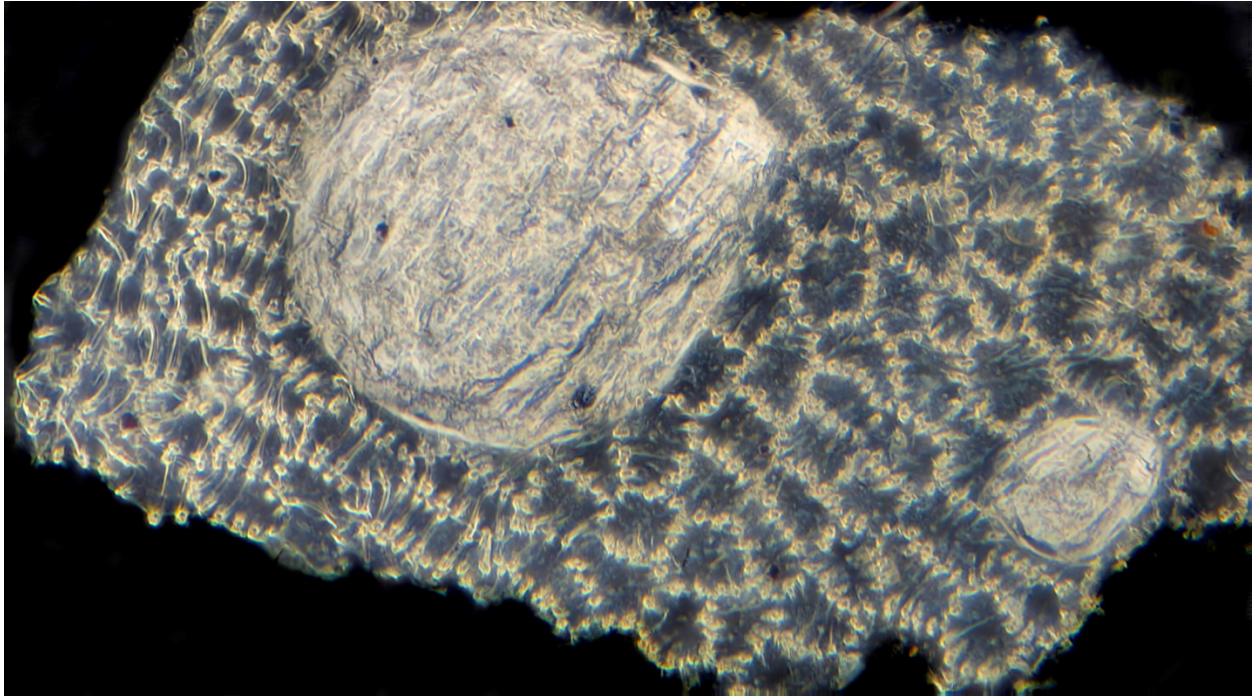


Another common "grab" was *Stellate trichome*.

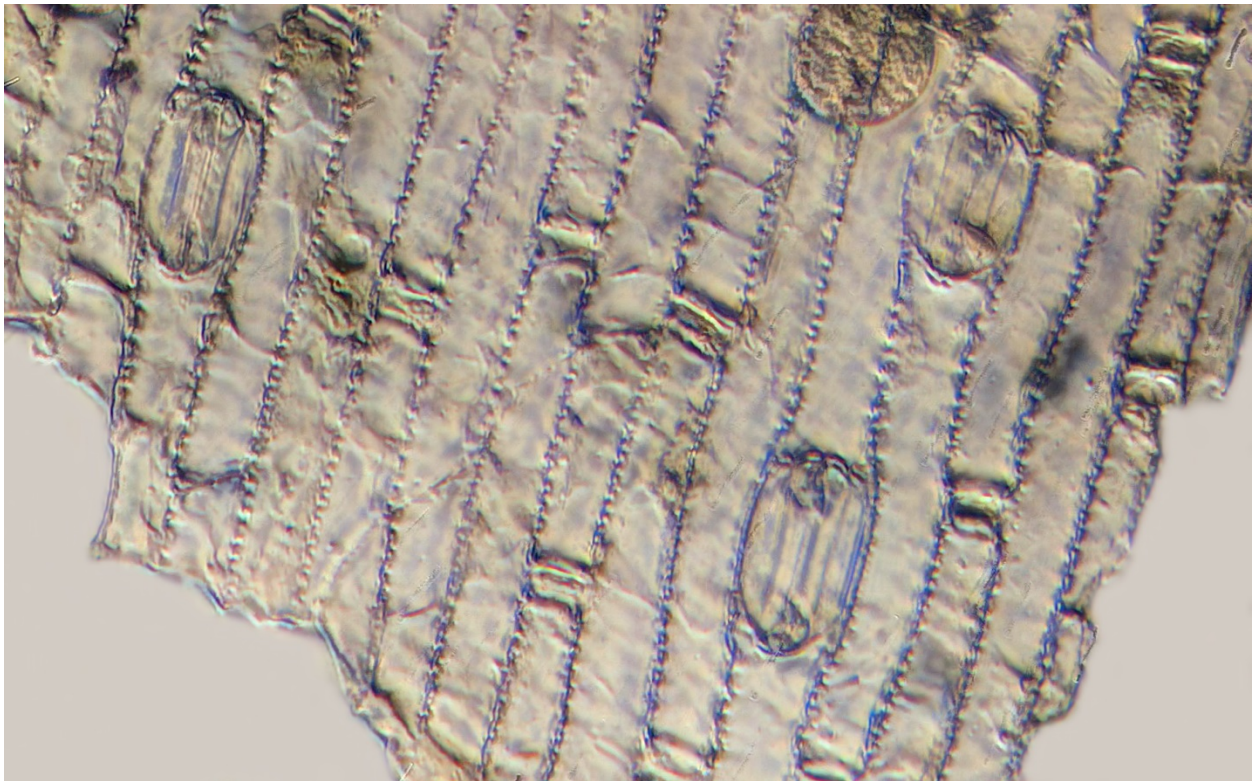




Another "grab" was dried-up moss...



and a fragment of a leaf showing stomata.



You may find it interesting to sample the air you are breathing in your area.

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