

Common Name: **Foxglove**

Genus: *Digitalis*

Species: *purpurea*

Family: Scrophulariaceae

AKA: Dead Man's Bells, Witches' Fingers, Fairy's Glove, Fairy Caps, Folksglove.



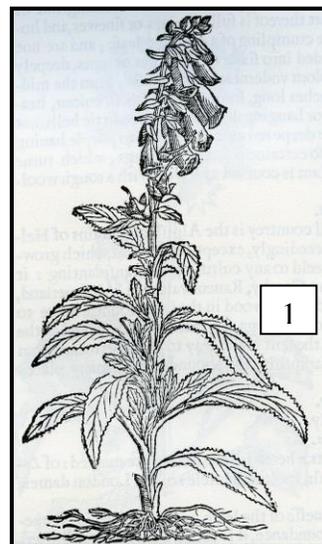
Historical Uses:

Medical: “Fox-glove boiled in water or wine, and drunken, doth cut and consume the thicke toughnesse of grosse and slimie fleme and naughtie humours. It openeth the stoppings of the liver, spleene, and milt, and of other inward parts. The same taken in like manner, or boiled with honied water or sugar , doth scoure and clense the brest, ripeneth and bringeth forth tough and clammie flegme.”(1)

Also recommended for persons who have fallen from high places. *Parkinson* speaks highly of the bruised or of its expressed juice for scrofulous swellings, when applied outwardly in the form of an ointment , and bruised leaves for cleansing old sores and ulcers. (2)

Ornamental: Flower stalks makes it very attractive.

Folklore/Astrology: Name comes from the shape of the flowers which resemble fingers in a glove. Originally “Folks-glove” or glove of the good folk or fairies. Mentioned in a list of plants during the time of Edward the III (England, 1312-1377). Anglo-Saxon form is *foxes glova*. Mottled spots on the



blossoms are said to be where the elves have placed their fingers. (3)



Contemporary Uses:

Medicinal: Plant is a major source of digitoxin, digoxin and gitoxin. “Digitalis” refers to the powdered leaf of *D. purpurea*, used in the form of tablets or capsules for certain heart conditions. Levels of chemicals in each plant can differ depending on location and weather. Use in treatment of heart disease started in late 1700's. Still grown commercially for the pharmaceutical industry.

Cautions: All parts are toxic if eaten. (4)

Foxglove plant in flower

Area of Origin: Europe.

Physical description: In flower, upright stalk with bell shaped flowers surrounding.

Plant type: Biennial, two season- first rosette of leaves, second, stem and flowers.

Form: Height: 30"-48"

Flower color: Purple, bell shaped and tubular.

Flowering period: June/July

Soil type/ requirements: Well-drained, rich, neutral to acid.

Fruit: inconspicuous

Hardiness zone: 6-9

Sun requirements: Partial sun/shade

Propagation: Sow by seed in autumn or spring.

Bibliography

1. Gerard, pg. 789-781
2. Grieve, pg. 322-326
3. Ibid
4. Bown, pg. 193-194

Illustrations:

1. Gerard, 1633
2. PSUMG 2005
3. PSUMG 2005



Close-up of flower stalk