



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Foxglove (*Digitalis pupurea*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

Come visit us!

Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:

<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

Foxglove, *Digitalis pupurea*

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/foxglove-digitalis-pupurea/

By colliek2

September 8, 2020

Beautiful but Deadly

An open field, scattered with tall spikes of red-purple, tubular flowers gently waving in the warm breeze. Hummingbirds flit stem to stem gathering nectar.



Foxglove (royalty free, Unsplash)

Downside? It can kill you.

What do you know about this beautiful and common, plant? Test your knowledge in this 10 question true or false quiz. Answers at the end.

True or False?

1. Foxglove is native to western and southwestern Europe, western and central Asia, and northwestern Africa.
2. Foxglove flowers can be yellow.
3. A common name for this plant was 'witch's glove.'
4. It takes two years to get a bloom.

5. Plants thrive on recently disturbed acidic soils.
6. All parts of the plant are poisonous to humans.
7. Inhaling the pollen can affect some people.
8. Wear gloves when collecting, handling fresh and dried materials.
9. Chemicals from Foxgloves are used for making heart medicine.
10. The chemicals from Foxgloves were thought to control seizures.

The Answers

If you said true to all of these statements, you were right! Want to know more?
Here are the backstories:

1. Foxgloves are very common but not native to our area. They are native to parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa.
2. Flowers can be purple, pink, fuchsia, white, and yellow. Breeders are working on new colors such as peach. Flowers can have various marks and spotting. Bloom color will change as flowers age.
3. There were several common names for this plant (not all complementary) including: 'witch's glove', 'dead man's bells', and 'fox's glove'.
4. Foxglove is a biennial plant, meaning it completes a full lifecycle (including reseeding) in two years.
5. Plants will routinely colonize disturbed areas, especially if the soil is a bit acid and well drained. Locations can include woodlands, sea-cliffs, mountain slopes, and open fields.
6. Beautiful but deadly. All parts of this plant, fresh and dried, are poisonous. Even deer and rabbits will leave them alone. There have been cases where deadly foxglove leaves were confused with harmless comfrey leaves.
7. Pollen can contain a tiny amount of digoxin which is a type of cardiac glycosides.
8. As a general rule, wear gloves when collecting, arranging, or cleaning up garden debris. Foxgloves were probably one of the plants that rule was made for as even a tiny bit of sap transferred from glove to shovel handle can be a problem.
9. Digoxin, extracted from several varieties of Foxglove is used to create medicines for congestive heart failure and seizures.
10. Foxglove is no longer used for seizures. It is thought that Vincent van Gogh may have been influenced during his "Yellow Period" by digitalis therapy used to control seizures.

REFERENCES:

- Better Homes and Gardens (<https://www.bhg.com>)
- Wikipedia, Foxglove (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digitalis>)
- Foxglove Flower Alert, Whats Cooking America (<https://whatscookingamerica.net>)
- Gardening Know How, Foxglove (<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com>)