

Digitalis purpurea



Family: Scrophulariaceae

Local/common names:

Foxglove, Tilpushpi, Purple
foxglove, Lady's glove

Trade name: Hritpatti

Profile:

Digitalis purpurea is a herbaceous perennial flowering plant in the family Scrophulariaceae. The flowers are very attractive and noted for attracting wild life. Due to the presence of the cardiac glycoside digitoxin, the leaves, flowers and seeds are poisonous to human beings and some animals and can be fatal if eaten. The foxglove is a widely used herbal medicine with a recognized stimulatory effect upon the heart.

Habitat and ecology: The plant can grow in semi-shade or under conditions of no shade. It requires dry or moist soil. The plant is naturally found in the temperate zone at an altitude range of 1600-2400 m in the Himalayas from Himachal Pradesh to Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Darjeeling of the eastern Himalayas. The plants are cultivated chiefly along hilly regions of north India such as in Kashmir Darjeeling and the Nilgiri hills in the south.

Morphology: This is a biennial or perennial herb that grows up to 2 m high. The lower basal leaves are long stalked, hairy, and ovate while the upper leaves are almost without stalks and reduce in size as they move upwards. The flowers are 5-8 cm long, white or purple in colour with ciliate lobes and are borne in 30-60 cm long one sided bunches. The fruits are ovoid.

Distinguishing features: Ciliate lobed brightly coloured flowers are the main distinguishing feature of the plant.

Life cycle: It is in flower from June to September and the seeds ripen from August to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite and are pollinated by bees.

Uses: The dried leaves of the plant are used to prepare drugs for heart diseases and very beneficial for kidney problems. A paste made from the flower is considered effective in the treatment of intestinal problems. Care should be exercised in the use of this plant because therapeutic dose is very close to the lethal dose.

Market rate: Data not available