

Foxglove

Digitalis purpurea

Digitalis purpurea (foxglove) is a highly toxic, biennial environmental weed originating from Europe, known for its tall, purple, or white tubular flowers. It acts as a weed in pastures, forests, and disturbed areas in regions like New Zealand and Australia, spreading rapidly through seeds and posing risks to human and livestock health.

Identification & Impact

Appearance: Produces a low rosette of soft, hairy leaves in the first year and a 1–2 meter tall, foxglove-like flower spike in the second year.

Habit: Thrives in disturbed, damp, and sunny to semi-shaded environments.

Toxicity: All parts of the plant are highly poisonous due to cardiac glycosides, potentially causing severe illness if ingested.

Impact: Listed as an environmental weed in New Zealand, where it colonizes cleared, disturbed areas.

Control

Manual Removal: Hand-pulling is effective for smaller infestations.

Mechanical Control: Regular mowing can reduce infestations.

Chemical Control: Spot spraying with appropriate herbicides (Triclopyr 60ml/10L) is recommended for larger areas.

Prevention: Control is best achieved by pulling or cutting plants before they set seed, which typically happens in their second year.

