

Fruitful Multiplication

The Foxglove

The Foxglove bears tall, dramatic spikes of tubular flowers with speckled throats. Foxglove blooms in midsummer and adds elegance to a perennial border, woodland area, or shade garden.



About This Plant

The Foxglove's low-growing foliage is topped by 2- to 5-foot-tall flower spikes, depending on the variety. Flower colours include pink, red, purple, white, and yellow. Foxgloves are biennials or short-lived perennials. However, although individual plants may be short-lived, the foxglove readily self-sows and **multiplies**.

Site Selection

Select a site with full sun to light shade and moist yet well-drained soil.

Planting Instructions

Set plants out in spring or fall, spacing plants 1 to 2 feet apart, depending on the variety; sow seeds in early summer. Prepare the garden bed by using a garden fork or tiller to loosen the soil to a depth of 12 to 15 inches, then mix in a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost. Dig a hole twice the diameter of the pot the plant is in. Carefully remove the plant from its container and place it in the hole so the top of the root ball is level with the soil surface. Carefully fill in around the root ball and firm the soil gently. Water thoroughly.

Care

Apply a thin layer of compost each spring, followed by a 2-inch layer of mulch to retain moisture and control weeds. Water plants during the summer if rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. Stake tall varieties to keep them upright. Remove the central flower spike after flowering to encourage other side shoots to form and produce more flowers. However, if you want the plant to self-sow and **multiply**, leave the flower spike intact on the plant so seeds can mature and disperse.

The Biblical Principle of Multiplication

Jesus' teaching method was "first in the natural – then in the spiritual" (1 Corinthians 15 v46). This is one reason why He was so effective as a teacher of principles. Who remembers

the hit by this name in the '60s by Bobby Darren "Put two butterflies together and you'll soon have a butterfly collection ..."?

Jesus taught multiplication of the natural in the parable of The Sower (Matt 13 v8, Mark 8 v8) and Rewards in the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Matt 19 v29, Mark 10 v30). Jesus also teaches multiplication of money in the Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19 v12 – 20) and the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25 v14 – 27).

But how does it work in the spiritual? For example, in the principle of Sowing and Reaping Paul says in 2 Cor 9 v10: "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." Paul was talking of a miracle here – the multiplying of a seed in our lives into out-flowing righteousness.

Compare this to Malachi 3 v10: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' said the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'"

Here Malachi is referring to the commandment in Deuteronomy 14 v28 to bring the tithes into the storehouse in each town. God is saying, first give in the natural – then he will outpour both in the natural and in the spiritual. That is multiplication!

Read the story of the Widow's Oil (2 Kings 4 v1-7) where God supernaturally multiplied the widow's oil. The oil was so much that she and her sons could pay her debt and live on the rest. Thus the widow was not only delivered from her problem but she was more than delivered: she got an oil-treasure. And all this because she sought the deliverance of the Lord. She went to God and to His man, Elisha, poor and oppressed and she left rich and delivered. This just shows the greatness of the woman's faith. She trusted God's prophet. She knew that he would not deceive her or bid her do anything for which there was not a good reason- She trusted God's power. She knew that God was able, in his own way and in his own time, to supply all her need. We need to learn a similar faith. We need to trust God that he can and will and does supply the daily wants of his people. This simple and touching story is one of those many narratives which make the Bible a book for everyone, and a book for everyday life. It helps us understand the multiplying effect following time with the Lord – blending the natural with the spiritual, experiencing the presence of God's Holy Spirit. It is the same principle throughout the Bible. Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes. He turned a real life problem into a meaningful experience.

Perhaps the greatest illustration of these two threads – the natural and the spiritual – being drawn together into one was in Christ's pronouncement in Jerusalem at His final appearance, which so antagonised His persecutors that they drove Him to the cross – John 7 v37 – 39: "On the last and greatest day of the Feast (of Tabernacles) Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."

We are a part of the storehouse that God has chosen in which to plant His seed. He will multiply it – first in the natural and then in the spiritual. Can we understand it? No. But God doesn't ask that of us. He calls us to walk by faith and believe.

Do you have the faith to believe? The early Believers did.

In Acts 9 v31 we read "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord."

Be strengthened, be encouraged ... and encourage others to walk in faith.