

# Penstemon digitalis

## Foxglove or Tall White Beard-tongue

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

Attractive foliage and showy flowers recommend this plant, which is so readily adaptable to the Mid-Atlantic climate that it may not be native\* to Virginia, but rather a Midwest introduction through cultivation. The genus name derives from the Greek “penta” and “stemon” or “five stamen”— a reference to its characteristic fifth sterile stamen, a staminode.



| Perennial  | Flowers En Masse and Close-up**  |
|--|--|
| Height: 2–4 feet   | <br>  |
| Spread: 1½–2 feet  |  |
| Bloom Color: White with purple/lavender  |  |
| Characteristics  |  |
| Upright, clump-forming, herbaceous <a href="#">perennial</a>   |  |
| <a href="#">Elliptic</a> , toothed, green to red-tinted basal <a href="#">rosette</a> leaves; <a href="#">opposite</a> , <a href="#">lanceolate</a> , often finely-toothed & shiny leaves on <a href="#">glabrous</a> , rigid, green to purple-tinged <a href="#">stems</a>  |  |
| Terminal, sometimes <a href="#">glandular-pubescent</a> , <a href="#">panicles</a> of tubular, <a href="#">bilabiate</a> , white flowers often with pink or violet lines inside <a href="#">corolla</a> and five <a href="#">stamens</a> (including one apically <a href="#">pubescent staminode</a> ) bloom for about one month late spring to early summer |  |
| Oval <a href="#">septicidal capsules</a> follow  |  |
| Spreads by seed or by short <a href="#">rhizomes</a>   |  |
| Attributes   |  |
| Tolerates clay <a href="#">soil</a> , dry soil, drought; no serious pests or diseases, although <a href="#">root rot</a> can occur in waterlogged soils; <a href="#">deer</a> occasionally severely damage   |  |
| Attractive in fresh-cut floral arrangements  |  |
| Attracts specialized bees, other pollinators (including butterflies and hummers); <a href="#">larval</a> host to ~7 <a href="#">lepidopterans</a>  |  |
| Growing and Maintenance Tips   | Excellent Replacement for  |
| <a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Well-drained, <a href="#">loamy</a>  | <a href="#">Lythrum salicaria</a> - Purple Loosestrife   |
| <a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Sun, Partial Shade  | <a href="#">Saponaria officinalis</a> - Soapwort/Bouncing Bet  |
| <a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Dry (occasionally), Moist   | <a href="#">Securigera varia</a> syn. <a href="#">Coronilla varia</a> - Crown Vetch  |
| Yellows and wilts in severe drought  | <p>*It is <a href="#">native</a> to DC and common in DE. It is present throughout MD and PA. In VA, it is frequent in the northern mountains and Piedmont, infrequent elsewhere in these provinces, and rare in the Coastal Plain, but It is not clear whether this species is native to Virginia or introduced from the midwestern U.S. In NoVA, it has not been reported in Arlington County.</p> <p>**May be popular <a href="#">cultivar</a> ‘Husker Red.’</p> |
| Use in borders or in native, pollinator, butterfly, drought-tolerant, or naturalized gardens   |  |
| <a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 4a-8b   |  |
| developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria   |  |

Images by Christa Watters (top), Simpson Park Demo Garden and by Mary Free, MG Tribute Garden



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