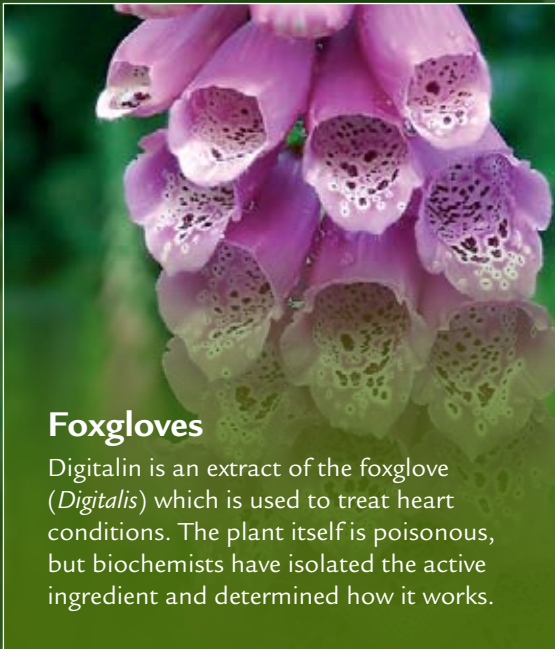


Natural born

Many drugs which are commonly used today are similar to naturally occurring compounds which have been used for centuries to treat illnesses.

healers

Chemists have identified and purified these substances. By determining their molecular structures they can then synthesise similar compounds which may have improved medicinal effects.



Foxgloves

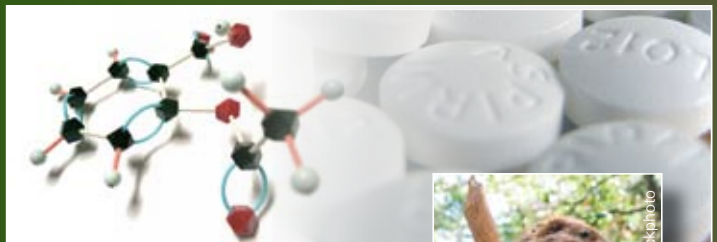
Digitalin is an extract of the foxglove (*Digitalis*) which is used to treat heart conditions. The plant itself is poisonous, but biochemists have isolated the active ingredient and determined how it works.

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Beavers and willows

Willow trees (*Salix*) contain salicylic acid, a substance similar to aspirin. Beavers (*Castor*) eat the bark and cambium of willows; the acid accumulates in their anal glands. People discovered that eating these glands could reduce a fever, and so beavers were hunted almost to extinction.

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Mould

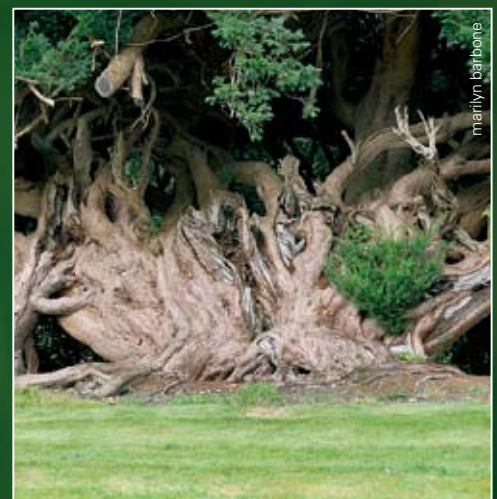
Many blue cheeses are made using a mould called *Penicillium*. This is the source of the antibiotic penicillin.



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Yew

Leaves of the yew tree (*Taxus*) contain a substance which can be modified to produce an anti-cancer drug, docetaxol. People with yew trees are asked to supply clippings to drug laboratories.



marilyn barbone

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