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*Erinus alpinus*

**FAIRY FOXGLOVE** is a semi-evergreen perennial. Native to mountainous western Europe (including Britain) it has lavender or purple-pink flowers.

It is also known as *Alpen-Leberbalsam* (German), Alpine balsam, Alpine erinus, Jewel flower, Liver balsam, Roman wall plant, and Summer starwort,

The plant is protected in some areas.

*Alpinus* means ‘alpine’ ie. found above the tree line.

According to a legend of north-eastern England the flower grows in the footsteps of Roman soldiers and in that area that means Hadrian’s Wall. Hadrian (76-138) was declared Roman Emperor by the Roman army in 117 and inherited massive territory with extensive frontiers and a shortage of manpower to secure them. Britannia was in its north-western extremity and the Picts of Caledonia across its border there were an irritation. By 130, nine years after the idea of a wall to separate northern England from the unoccupied central Lowlands was first mooted, Roman army engineers had constructed its 73 mile length from the Tyne to the Solway Firth. It contained 16 forts as well as half-mile lookout points and was 8 feet wide. Today fairy foxglove can be found within its range.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century fairy foxglove has been popular in Britain as an ornamental rock-garden plant.