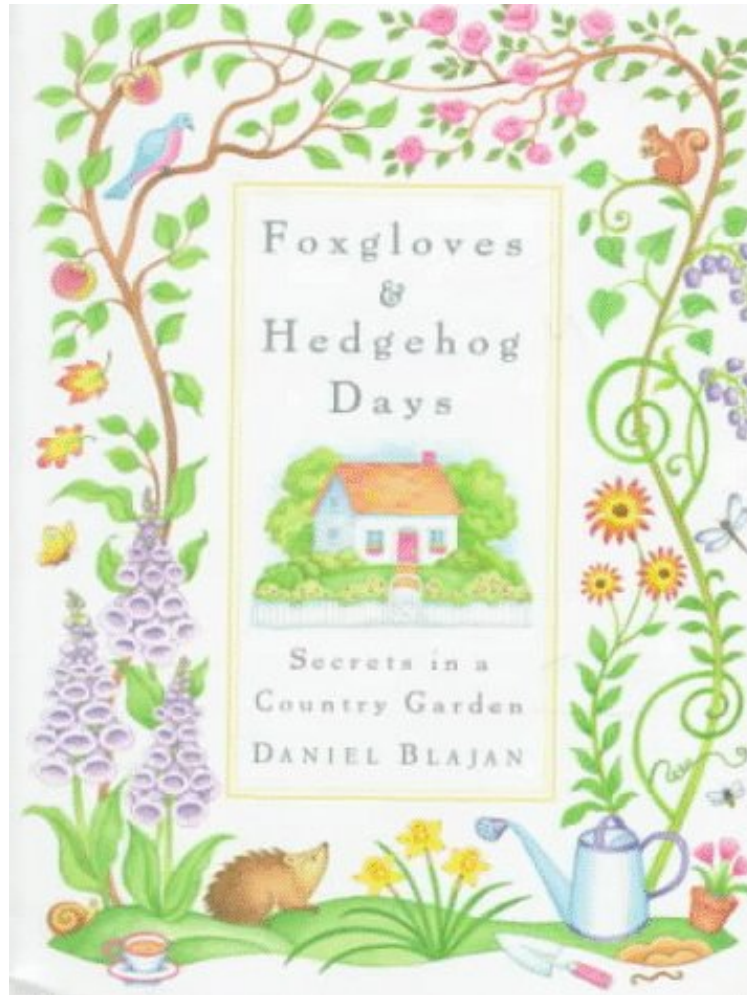


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## Foxgloves and Hedgehog Days

*Daniel Blajan*

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**Daniel Blajan : Foxgloves and Hedgehog Days** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Foxgloves and Hedgehog Days:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Delightful ReadBy Terry P.This is an absolutely delightful book! I wish he would write more like it!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must-haveBy Cynthia M. SchindlerI have bought so many copies of this wonderful little gem to give to friends over the years, and I still read mine over over. A hidden treasure for anyone who loves nature, gardening, and little critters. Mr. Blajan, thank you for this priceless little book.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Magic is in your garden, if you know where and how to lookBy LucyI ordered this little book on a whim (the beautiful artwork on the cover first attracted me)and it turned out to be a treasure. Usually a fast reader, I made myself read only one story a day to make it last longer. Gardening is hard work and when you are feeling up to your ears in bugs and weeds, it helps to share the delights of a

fellow gardener who also knows how hard it all is but who can remind you why you do it - for the special joy of watching the flowers bloom at last and the animals play in your little piece of paradise. I had a wonderful time imagining myself in his garden and I think I will be a bit more sensitive to the happenings in my own garden in the future. This would make a great gift for birthday, get well, etc.

Like Keats, "too long in city pent," Daniel Blajan moved from his city condominium to a cottage in a rural village. Reminiscent of *A Year in Provence*, his completely delightful memoir introduces us to the flora, fauna, and neighbors in his new life. *Foxgloves and Hedgehog Days* is full of amusing anecdotes about Blajan's adjustments to country living - like the time he convinced the local bureaucracy that the rush matting he erected to hide an eyesore had grown roots and was therefore a hedge, not subject to fence height laws. Or the day all the rooftops in the village sprouted bright yellow flowers. Or the ceremony surrounding the death of the community's four-hundred-year-old linden tree and the final miracle it displayed. Or the frogs who showed him why he shouldn't "improve" his pond - and much, much more.

From Kirkus a pleasantly campy, my-life-in-Elysium gardener's memoir. Blajan, born in Monte Carlo, but now of uncertain age, moved six years ago to "a small cottage in an extremely rural area near the Belgian border." Our narrator is nothing if not coy. He never does tell us, for example, which nation he lives in with so many ladybugs, weeds, wasps, flowers, and slugs. Blajan builds an enchanting personal myth from his universal backyard in Eden. Like an Adam who can't stop snickering, he discovers nature with a light-handed, unconventional lan: Before his very eyes, a fanciful stinkhorn fungus, "vaguely obscene," swells up pink and orange from the depths of a hedge. He learns that "pine cones do have voices"--which are exercised when heat causes the cones to expand and explode. As a self-described "horticultural nitwit" who spends half of every year as an officer on a cruise ship, Blajan comes home to diddle with the bliss of daffodils: "Some looked like roses and some looked like weird spidery insects. Some looked like they ought to be psychoanalyzed." Yet these brief, sociable, lyric essays do not just joke around. By the time Blajan has told the tale of a centuries-old linden tree, culminating in the tree's bizarre funeral service, it is difficult not to be moved. Likewise, his verbal snapshot of an elderly, blind gardener and her acute sense of smell, sound, and touch is unforgettable. "Silence does not exist. Silence is a patchwork of little sounds," he decides because of her. Though Blajan's giddiness can get the better of him, he knows how to charm: "We should festoon the entire world with garlands that will reach from one continent to another and bring the people together. An impractical and whimsical suggestion, maybe, of which I'm nevertheless very much in favor." Peter Pan succumbs gleefully to a toadstool. -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.