

NETTLE





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Introduction

Stinging Nettle is a "super plant" for health, sustenance, and sustainable living. This e-booklet is an overview of stinging nettle, covering its botany, uses, nutritional benefits, and medicinal properties.

NOTE: If considering nettle for therapeutic purposes, consult with a healthcare provider, as it may interact with medications like anticoagulants or blood pressure drugs.



Stinging Nettle: Identification

Stinging nettle is widespread across temperate regions of the world, and you can find it just about anywhere in North America. Wherever you go, there's almost always a nettle plant eager to make contact.

A Medicinal Plant That Packs a Punch!

Have you ever been out in nature, perhaps walking through the forest or along a river, enjoying the majestic trees, delicate flowers, and vibrant green leaves? It's a peaceful experience, until suddenly—ouch! You feel a sharp, burning pain in your leg and realize you've been stung by stinging nettle!

This e-booklet is about this fascinating plant. Despite its painful sting, nettle is an incredibly powerful medicinal herb!



Stinging nettle resembles mint in several ways. It has square stems, a feature common to the mint family, though its stems are slightly less square. The leaves grow in opposite pairs, first north and south, then east and west—again, a characteristic of mint plants.

The key difference, however, is its sting. Stinging nettle has tiny hypodermic needles all over its leaves and stems. When these needles puncture your skin, they release formic acid and other chemicals that cause intense irritation and a burning sensation. The genus name *Urtica* comes from the Latin word for “burn,” which is fitting, given the discomfort it causes!

Sustainable Harvesting Tips:

- Focus on spring harvesting when the plants are young (no taller than 1–1.5 feet).
- Leave enough of the plant for regrowth and sustainable harvesting over time.
- The roots, harvested in the fall, are particularly useful for testosterone-related benefits.



NOTE: Fibers from nettle stems can be processed into durable textiles, twine, and cordage!



Surprising Uses of the “Sting” in Nettle

Surprisingly, that “sting” can also provide therapeutic benefits. The initial pain from the sting might be unpleasant, but it has been shown to help alleviate chronic pain and inflammation. For thousands of years, people have used stinging nettle as a form of “urtication therapy” (from *Urtica*), intentionally stinging themselves to relieve conditions like arthritis and joint pain. The formic acid released during the sting affects neurotransmitters like serotonin and substance P, which are involved in transmitting pain signals, thereby reducing pain and inflammation.

NOTE: Chewing nettle leaf can boost your mood and provide a mild "high" due to its interaction with serotonin and cannabinoid receptors!



Interestingly, the relief is not short-term. After being stung, many people experience long-lasting relief from pain and stiffness in their joints.

Folk herbalists in Europe and North America applied fresh nettle directly to inflamed joints to stimulate circulation and reduce pain. In traditional medicine, nettle has been used both topically and internally to relieve inflammation and allergy symptoms. Modern studies support its anti-inflammatory properties, linking these benefits to compounds such as serotonin, acetylcholine, and histamine. Clinical research highlights its ability to alleviate joint pain, reduce inflammation in arthritis, and manage allergic rhinitis.

Nettle Leaf

If you prefer to avoid the sting but still want the medicinal benefits, the harvested leaf of stinging nettle is gentle but effective. It's known for a myriad of properties, including:

Diuretic: Stinging nettle helps support kidney function and reduce fluid retention.

Mild Antimicrobial: It's useful for treating bladder infections, urinary tract infections (UTIs), and other infections like *Helicobacter pylori*, which causes ulcers.

Anti-inflammatory: Internally, it can help treat arthritis, joint inflammation, and general body inflammation.

Antihistamine: It reduces allergy symptoms by inhibiting histamine production, preventing histamine release from mast cells, and blocking histamine receptors—perfect for seasonal allergies.

Hair and Skin Health: The bioactive compounds in stinging nettle, including silica and flavonoids, promote hair growth and are used in remedies for dandruff and scalp health.



Nettle Seed

Folk healers incorporated nettle seed into spice blends, simmered teas (decoctions), and soups to help flush out toxins and improve skin clarity. The seeds of stinging nettle are especially beneficial for kidney health. They nourish and support weakened or damaged kidneys.

Noted herbalist David Winston has written extensively about his clinical use of nettle seed to improve kidney function by regulating blood markers like urea and creatinine.





Nettle Root

Native populations in Europe traditionally brewed nettle root tea to relieve urinary discomfort in older men. In Europe, nettle root has been a staple treatment for urinary disorders and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). It supports urinary flow and reduces prostate size, often in combination with *Serenoa repens* (saw palmetto).

Traditional remedies used nettle root as a tea or tincture to improve vigor and hair health. Nettle root contains lignans that inhibit the enzyme aromatase, which converts testosterone to estrogen, making it beneficial for hormonal balance, particularly in men.

Nettle: Nutritional Powerhouse

Beyond its medicinal properties, stinging nettle is an exceptional source of vitamins and minerals that are difficult to obtain from modern food. It's not an annoying weed, but a nutritional powerhouse!

In European traditions, nettle soup was a springtime staple to replenish nutrients. High in iron, calcium, and vitamins A, C, and K, nettle has been used to combat anemia and fatigue. It is a key component in traditional "spring tonics" meant to revitalize the body after winter.

It's a great example of how herbs can nourish the body in addition to healing it!



Nettle: Simple Preparations

Simple Nettle Infusion (Tea)

Steep 2 tablespoons of dried nettle leaves in 16 ounces of boiling water for 10 minutes. Drink 1-2 cups daily to help manage seasonal allergies or maintain overall health.



Nettle Root Tincture

Chop fresh nettle roots, place them in a jar, and cover with 50% alcohol (100 proof.) Let sit for 4-6 weeks. Strain and take daily for prostate support. Start with a few drops a day and increase until you feel you've reached the right dose.

Nettle Root Decoction

Boil 1 tablespoon of dried nettle root in 2 cups of water for 10 minutes. Strain and drink daily.





Nettle Smoothie

Blend 1 cup of fresh steamed nettles, 1 banana, 1 cup of unsweetened almond milk, and a dash of cinnamon. Consume as a nutrient-dense breakfast or snack.

Nettle Soup for Nutritional Support

Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil, add 4 cups of fresh nettle leaves, 4 cups of vegetable broth, and 1 diced potato. Simmer for 20 minutes, blend until smooth, and serve.



Nettle Detox Tea

Combine 1 tablespoon of dried nettle leaves, 1 teaspoon of dandelion root, and 1 teaspoon of peppermint in hot water. Let steep for 10 minutes, strain, and drink daily.



Conclusion: The Versatility of Nettle

Stinging nettle is truly a remarkable and accessible plant with a wide range of benefits. From its role in joint pain relief through urtication therapy to its internal use for kidney health, allergies, and inflammation, nettle is a versatile and potent herbal remedy. Whether you choose to use the leaf, seed, or root, or simply add it to your diet for its nutritional value, nettle is a plant worth considering!