



Nettles

“Be not nettled, my friend, at my praise of this useful weed. In Scotland, I have eaten nettles, I have slept in nettle sheets, and I have dined off a nettle tablecloth.” ~ Thomas Campbell, 1837

Ouch! If you’ve ever touched a fresh nettle plant, you know why it’s commonly called “stinging nettle.” But don’t dismiss it as a nuisance -- nettle is a highly prized herb.

While native to northern Europe and Asia, nettle now grows all over the world. It’s an upright plant, two to four feet tall, and it bears small, inconspicuous, greenish flowers from spring through summer. The leaves are heart-shaped, long, rough, and opposite, with coarse teeth and pointed ends. These leaves and the plant’s four-sided stems all contain tiny hairs that release those stinging chemicals when touched. *Urtica*, its genus name, comes from the Latin *urere*, “to burn,” while *dioica*,

the species name, means “two houses,” referring to the plant having either male or female flowers. (The male stinging nettle has fewer stinging hairs.) And the common name “nettle” may be derived from the word “needle,” or the Latin *nerē*, “to sew.”



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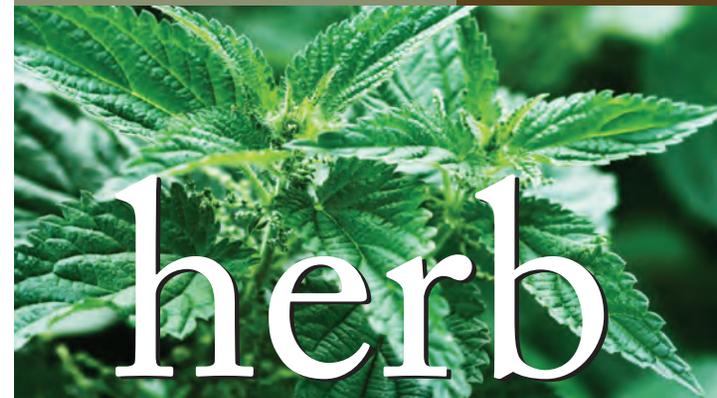
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Q&A

Most of the nettle tea recipes I see use the leaves. How do I make a tea from the root?

To make nettle root tea, combine 1 cup of water with ½ to 1 teaspoon nettle root and bring to a boil.

Simmer for 5 minutes; let stand for 10 to 15 minutes, and then strain. (See nettle tea blend in recipe section.)

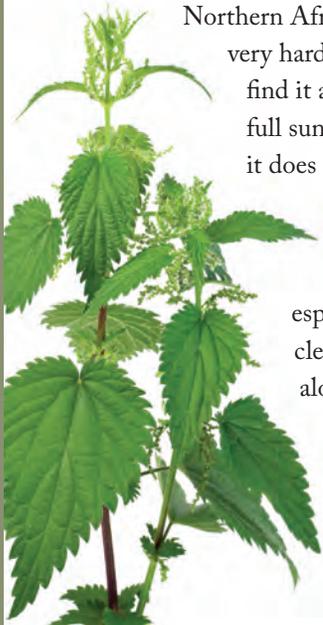


I'd like to harvest some nettle. Where can I find it?

Nettles show up as a wild plant throughout most of North American, Europe, Northern Africa and Asia. It's a very hardy plant, so you might find it anywhere from in the full sun to the full shade. But it does like moisture,

disturbed soil, and nitrogen-rich land.

Look for nettles especially in woodland clearings and thickets and alongside fertile fields and riverbanks, gardens, meadows and pastures. You might also find the plant along a partly shady trail.



For more information about nettles, visit www.frontiercoop.com

The Beauty of Nettles

The nettle plant's roots and stems have been used to make cloth and paper as well as green and yellow dyes. People have been drinking nettle tea for centuries, too, and it's also used to make beer and wine. Young, fresh nettle leaves are often eaten as a vegetable, prepared similarly to spinach or added to soups and stews. (The plant loses its sting when cooked.) Nettle will add nitrogen to the compost heap, and it will also help it decompose. A good liquid fertilizer can be made by steeping nettle in water for several hours.

Cosmetically, nettle leaf often contributes to hair products, such as shampoos and rinses. The herb is also found in skin lotions and rinses, facial steams, and bath preparations.

It's best to harvest young plants, while they're tender and not yet bitter. Simply cut the top six inches of the plant so it can recover and continue to grow. (This is also the most tender part of the plant.) And don't pick nettles alongside a highway (where they've been fumigated by cars) or in an area that may have been sprayed with chemicals. By the way, you're likely to find nettles in the same place next year that you found it this year.

You can also cultivate nettles (with seeds), though they're considered a pesky weed by many gardeners. And you can sometimes find them at a farmers' market. Of course, you can also buy dried nettle leaf and nettle root in bulk from Frontier.



Nettle Hair Rinse

This rinse is especially nice for bringing out dark highlights.

1 tablespoon dried nettle leaf ½ cup apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon dried sage leaf 1 cup boiling water

Place nettle, sage leaf, and vinegar in a non-aluminum bowl. Pour boiling water over the mixture. Steep, covered, for a couple of hours. Strain. Pour over hair after final shampooing, then towel dry.



Stimulating Nettle Bath

Perhaps best enjoyed in the morning, this bath will get you up and at 'em!

¼ cup dried nettle leaf ¼ cup dried peppermint leaf
¼ cup dried lavender flowers 4 cups boiling water
¼ cup dried rosemary

Combine herbs in a non-aluminum bowl. Pour boiling water over the herbs. Let steep, covered, for about half an hour. Strain and pour liquid into warm bathwater.

Nettle Tea

Here's a gentle and delicious nettle tea blend.

1 teaspoon dried nettle leaf 1 teaspoon elderflowers
1 teaspoon lemon balm 2 cups boiling water

Place herbs in a teapot. Pour water over herbs, cover and let steep for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain. Serve with lemon and honey, if you like.

