

Nettle *Urtica dioica* Jo Francks, M.H.

Nettle, also known as stinging nettle, is often overlooked as a nutritive or medicinal plant. On the contrary this wonderful floral specimen is a very resourceful plant. If you've ever had the experience of coming up against the leaves and experiencing the sting you're more likely to curse the plant than to praise it. This plant is very much worthy of praise because of the abundance of medicinal and nutritive properties it has to offer.



In the olden days fibers taken from the stems of nettles were used to make fabric similar to linen. This fabric didn't cause the stinging effect when worn against the skin because the inflammatory response comes from the little hairs on the edge of the leaf. The use of nettles for fabric dwindled when it was discovered that flax also made a nice fabric and was much easier to obtain.

Young nettle leaves and stems have been used as a potherb (steamed or cooked to be eaten) for centuries. Cooking or drying the leaves neutralizes the toxin. It's high in vitamin C and K, iron and other minerals. Because of its high nutritive properties it has been used as a feed supplement for poultry and other livestock. This is a good indication that it would be good for human consumption to increase nutritional intake.

The leaves, roots and seeds are all used medicinally. One of my herbal instructors intentionally exposed himself to nettles as an experiment. When the expected inflammatory response was at its peak he took the fresh leaves and bruised them and rubbed the bruised leaves over the inflamed skin. This brought immediate relief and was very soothing. His point was to show that nettle can be used as its own antidote. Other plants that help with the sting of nettle are mullein, burdock, plantain, hounds tongue and comfrey. Dr. Christopher referred to these plants as God's erasers and he said, "Just look around and within a few feet you will find one of these plants. Take the leaves, bruise them and gently rub them over the affected area." He said this would give immediate relief.

Nettle is used for asthma. It helps as an expectorant for the lungs. It is also a mild diuretic and anti-inflammatory. It's been used to help ease allergy symptoms and as a tonic for the skin. It is also a tonic for the entire body and combines well with other tonic and blood purifying herbs. If

using nettle for medicinal purposes make a tea using one teaspoon of dried leaves to a cup of boiling water. Steep for 15 to 20 minutes. Drink two or three cups of this tea a day. The tea can also be used as a rinse for the hair to bring back the natural color.

Jo Francks is a Master Herbalist graduate of The School of Natural Healing. She is also a Holistic Iridologist and Quantum Touch Practitioner.