



Natural Herbal Living
magazine

Nettle

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Letter from the Publisher

Amanda Klenner

Nettles—a weedy plant that grows up in fertile, disturbed soil. The bane of farmers and hikers alike, this plant is one people know as soon as they meet it, and it teaches respect to everyone who comes near it. Who would have thought such a seemingly off-putting plant could be chalk full of so much herbal wealth?

I have to say, even though this issue is much longer than our others, we may have to do a Nettles Part Two someday just to cover more of the amazing goodness of this wonderful plant. The high nutrient content of nettles makes it a perfect herb to enjoy daily in many herbal tea blends in order to help strengthen and nourish your body. It is delicious as a cooked spinach replacement in any recipe that you can imagine, from spanakopita and breakfast casseroles to stuffed hamburgers and everything in between. If Popeye had known about nettles he would have kicked his canned spinach habit to the curb!

Herbalists love nettles and, hopefully, after this week you will to. Its delicious, slightly salty flavor is pretty neutral in herbal tea blends, which adds a nice balanced base. Many people enjoy it daily in nourishing herbal infusions, which we will discuss in this issue as well.

I feel like I can't even begin to touch the surface of how spectacular nettles are in this short intro. Needless to say, our wonderful authors have done that for me. I hope you enjoy learning all about nettles and how to make them a part of your daily life. Be careful, you may find yourself collecting seeds to put this beneficial stinging herbal ally in your own garden one day.

Green Blessings,

- Amanda

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Nettle Herbal Monograph

Nina Katz

Common Name: Nettle

Latin Name: *Urtica dioica*

Other Names: Nettles, Stinging Nettle, Common Nettle

ACTIONS:

Leaves: tonic, nutritive, anti-inflammatory, astringent, diuretic, immunotonic, renal tonic, liver tonic, uterine tonic, galactagogue, detoxicant, glandular, antiseptic, hemostatic

Seeds: tonic, adrenal, anthelmintic

Roots: astringent, anti-inflammatory, glandular

Topically: rubefacient, hemostatic, stimulant, hair tonic, skin tonic

“When in doubt, give Nettles,” says the herbalist David Hoffman. This is one of our gentlest, most nourishing herbs, with the greatest breadth of indications. Few people will not find nettles helpful. It serves as a tonic for the entire body. Indeed, its uses are so numerous that it was difficult to finish this article!

I first made the acquaintance of nettle plants when I was accompanying my husband on a research trip to Germany. The Heidegger archive was conveniently near to the Schwarzwald, and as we walked through the woods I brushed my hand against nettles as often as I could. I had recently injured my thumb, and the nettle stings, while not particularly pleasant, improved my range of motion enough to motivate me to continue with this counter-intuitive course of treatment. A few weeks later, we found ourselves in the Russian countryside, where my 7-year-old nephew was delighted to bring me armfuls of this and watch incredulously as I brushed my thumb against them repeatedly.

Like a stern Zen master, nettle stings those who touch it casually and without focus. However, it accepts deliberate touch gently, whether the touch be firm or light. Intention is key to touching nettle plants. I have often harvested it barehanded and received no stings on the palm or palm side of the fingers. The backs of my hands, however, suffered greatly from their casual brushing against plants next to the ones I was harvesting.

Nettle may well be the most nutritious of all land-plants. The leaves are an excellent source of the following:

- beta carotene
- the B vitamins thiamin, niacin, and riboflavin
- vitamins B6, C, D, E, and K
- bioflavonoids, antioxidants, chlorophyll, essential fatty acids, polysaccharides, and carbohydrates

- the minerals calcium, magnesium, iron, selenium, zinc, potassium, phosphorus, boron, chrome, copper, sulphur, and aluminum

Nettle leaves also contain more protein by weight than any other plant. Thirty percent of nettle's weight consists of protein. It also contains more beta carotene than carrots. In other words, nettle is an amazing superfood, one of nature's most nourishing gifts. Chlorophyll is the plant's closest analogue to blood, and nettle is the land plant richest in chlorophyll; drinking a quart of strong nettle infusion is probably the closest gastronomic equivalent to a blood transfusion. Nettle's nutritional goodies are all water soluble, so preparing nettles as a long infusion allows you to reap the full benefit of the plant. You will absorb more nutrients from the infusion or a nettle soup than from a multi-vitamin or multi-mineral supplement, and the nutritional load is comparable. Not only that, but nettle enhances absorption. Many herbalists drink nettle infusion a few times a week, and some drink it daily. Because of its extraordinary nutritional power, it is an excellent drink to have when fasting, and also when convalescing. Obviously, it is a superb survival food, and also a forager's delight.

Nettle tonifies, or strengthens, the entire body. It builds energy calmly and steadily. In Traditional Chinese Medicine terms, it is a Yin tonic, meaning that it strengthens the Yin aspects of the self. It aids the body in cooling itself down more effectively as well as facilitating one's capacity for nurturance and self-nurture. It also strengthens all the vital organs, especially the immune system, the kidneys, the bladder, reproductive organs, the liver, the endocrine system, and the adrenals.

Nettle is appropriate for almost all chronic illnesses. It strengthens and gently stimulates the immune system without giving it the sudden jolt that garlic and Echinacea give. At the same time, it

strengthens the entire organism, facilitates a gentle detoxification, and both treats and prevents anemia. Nettle is also anti-inflammatory and in addition, as if that weren't enough, it facilitates the body's ability to detoxify, both by chelating heavy metals and by improving the functioning of all the organs of elimination, including the gut, bladder, kidneys, liver, lungs, and skin.

By strengthening the lungs, both boosting and training the immune system, and decreasing inflammation throughout the body, nettle helps in all respiratory illnesses, including asthma, bronchitis, and even tuberculosis.

Similarly, nettle helps the digestive system become more effective. It improves absorption and treats both constipation and diarrhea. Nettle is both gently laxative and also astringent, gently drawing in and toning the tissues. In addition, it treats ulcers and has a healing influence on the mucous membranes in the gastrointestinal track, as a 2004 study confirms (*Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 90 (2004) 205–215). This combination makes it useful for IBS and IBD, and practically specific for Crohn's disease. As an immunomodulation, it is appropriate for all autoimmune diseases.

This same study mentioned above confirms nettle's usefulness as a rich source of antioxidants and as an antimicrobial effective in treating both gram-positive and gram-negative bacterial infections.

Nettle is useful for treating both rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, lumbago, and sciatica. One may take the tincture or infusion to help with inflammation, and also follow the strange tradition of hitting oneself with nettle, or brushing up against nettle with the inflamed joints, much as I did with my finger in the

Schwarzwald. When you deliberately court the sting it may elude you, of course, but when it does sting it helps both as a counter-irritant and as a counter-intuitive anti-inflammatory. You wouldn't expect a sting to treat inflammation, but nettle does. Stranger still, although the sting causes pain, it also reduces any pain that was there before the sting.

Nettle helps stimulate the circulation, although it can also stop bleeding. It contains both vitamin K, which allows for blood clotting, and coumarin, which is a blood thinner. Because it helps the circulation and is full of antioxidants, it is a useful remedy for arteriosclerosis.

Nettle also helps regulate the menstrual cycle, prevents excessive menstrual bleeding, and both treats and prevents menstrual cramps. It also helps regulate the hormones more generally. As such, nettle is a wonderful ally in menopause as well, and as a Yin tonic it helps enormously with hot flashes.

Nettle tonifies the uterus and is an excellent herb for pregnant women. Because of its extraordinary nutritional load, it serves as a pregnancy multi-vitamin and multi-mineral supplement, and it also helps ensure a sufficient milk supply. New mothers continuing with nettle infusion will find their milk both plentiful and rich; you may literally feel yourself filling up after drinking the infusion.

Nettle helps treat inflammation in the urinary tract and is specific for kidney stones. It also strengthens the kidneys and bladder more generally, and acts as a diuretic to flush the urinary tract.

Nettle may also be useful to lower both blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Because of its high protein content, it would be useful in diabetes and hypoglycemia even if it didn't lower blood sugar levels directly. Similarly, because of its high antioxidant value, its anti-inflammatory qualities, and its efficacy in improving

circulation, it is good for the heart regardless of its effects of blood pressure.

Nettle root is among the most effective treatments for Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia¹. Prepare or purchase the root as an alcohol-based tincture.

Nettle helps nourish and calm the adrenal glands. The leaves help the adrenals and the seeds help them even more. If you have a nettle patch near you, harvest the seeds in late fall and sprinkle them generously on your salads.

According to Kiva Rose, nettle seeds also improve mental function, emotional wellness, and energy level. She finds the fresh seeds strongly stimulant, and therefore recommends using them dried instead.

Freeze-dried nettle capsules treat seasonal allergies and hay fever. It is most effective to begin taking them in spring and continue throughout the allergy season.

Dioscorides and Hippocrates recommended fresh nettle juice for wounds. Because of the high vitamin K content and the astringent quality, nettle juice stops bleeding both when applied topically and when taken internally. An antiseptic as well as a hemostatic, it makes an appropriate poultice for cuts, abscesses, and ulcers. Use the juice, the dried leaves, or the blanched or steamed fresh leaves to prevent stinging. To possibly stop internal hemorrhaging, drink nettle juice. In Russian folk medicine, nettle leaves are rolled up and inserted into the nostrils to stop nose bleeds.

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17509841>

Nettle is used externally in Russian folk medicine as an emergency treatment for hypothermia. The person would be blanketed in nettles to stimulate the circulation. It is also used externally as a skin and hair treatment, including as a treatment for both acne and dandruff. Nettle helps stimulate hair growth. Use the infusion as a wash for the skin and a final rinse for the hair, or as an ingredient in hair conditioner and skin lotions.

Stinging nettle grows on farms, disturbed grounds, moist fields, railroad beds, meadows, and the edges of forests. It is part of the larger nettle family, the Urticaceae. It has opposite, heart-shaped lobed leaves, small needles moderately distributed along the stems branches, and tiny flowers that bloom late in summer. The flowers have four petals and four stamens and are radially symmetrical. Nettle grows 3.3 to 6.6 feet (1-2 meters) tall. It is best to harvest nettle in the spring and early summer, but I have harvested it in mid-August without ill effect.

Nettle works as a tincture, vinegar, long infusion, and, specifically for allergies, in pill form. Most often one uses the leaves, but for Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia nettle root tincture is the appropriate remedy. For the adrenals, the seeds are most helpful. For nutritional support, the long infusion or any food preparation will be most helpful. For mineral support more specifically, the vinegar is most helpful.

The simplest way to prepare nettle as food is to fill a large basket with the leaves, remove the stems and chop the leaves coarsely. Next, put them into a large pot, cover with water and bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and allow them to simmer for 30-60 minutes. At that point, you may either eat the soup, preferably with a little miso added, or turn the heat off and let the soup continue steeping for as long as you can wait for it.

Nettle works as a cooked green in any recipe calling for greens. Simply sauté or braise it as you would kale.

Off-season, I use nettle powder to make wonderful herbal pesto. Use one tablespoon of nettle powder, one tablespoon of dulse powder, a head of garlic, and about 12 ounces of olive oil. If fresh cilantro or basil is available, chop up a tablespoon of each or either and add. If fresh nettle is available, blanch it first, then chop up finely and add about two tablespoons instead of the powdered.

Finally, when you need the nutritional power of nettle and don't have time to prepare anything else, there's always instant Nmorrel soup, so-called because it tastes like sorrel soup, but we make it with nettle and miso. Bring water to a boil, turn off the flame, and let the water sit and cool for a few minutes while putting a heaping teaspoon each of miso paste and nettle powder into a mug. Pour in the water, stir thoroughly, and enjoy!

Nettle is contraindicated for anyone with excessive platelet count. Also, while extremely unusual, allergy to nettle does exist and may cause skin rashes or dermatitis. If you have an allergic reaction, discontinue use immediately and try some plantain or calendula salve externally, and goldenrod tincture internally. Some herbalists advise against harvesting nettle when it is in bloom. Others use it throughout its growing season. I suggest using it primarily in spring and early summer, and occasionally later in the season.

References

- Susun Weed has written extensively about nettle as a nourishing tonic, and the popularity of nettle infusion is due largely to her efforts. In particular, see *Healing Wise*, pp. 165-190.

- http://esa.ipb.pt/pdf/RefPlants_20.pdf Journal of Ethnopharmacology 90 (2004) 205–215
- <http://nmedik.org/sredstva/krapiva/poleznye-svoistva.html>
- <http://chto-polezno.ru/krapiva-poleznye-svojstva-primenenie.html>
- <http://www.orc.ru/~bronis/fito/krap.htm>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17509841>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23092723>
- <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/stinging-nettle>
- <http://bearmedicineherbals.com/nettle-seed-as-adrenal-trophorestorative-adaptogen.html>



How to Make a Flower Essence

Charis Denny

One of the experiences that can bring us a better and closer understanding of flower essences is to learn how to make one on our own. They are remarkably easy to do, and take very little in the way of time, knowledge, or supplies.

When you make an essence out of a common plant, it can be fascinating to discover if your experience with your essence matches the plant's known properties, as the same variety of plant from differing locales can have very different "vibes". A flower picked from a beautiful mountain meadow will have a unique quality to it separate from the same type of flower picked from the side of a highway. I will say that if you have the option of a flower from a beautiful mountain meadow, always go with that, but for our purposes using a fresh flower from your backyard, local park, or even your alley way will work beautifully.

Try your very best, though, to get your hands on flowers that have not been sprayed with any pesticides or chemicals.

Now, let's get started! This is a good time to say that making a flower essence, particularly on a commercial healing scale, can be a process involving many more rituals and steps than we are covering. The intention here is just to give you a good overview so that you can give it a try for yourself.

First, you will want to gather your supplies: a clear glass or crystal bowl, a bottle of reasonably good brandy (something you would actually drink if you were to take a sip of brandy now and again), spring water (not distilled or tap), an unused glass bottle, and a handful of the freshest, most vibrant and beautiful flower blossoms you can find. Also, you will need a completely sunny, cloudless day, which hopefully abound for you the way they do for us here in Colorado. Also, when I make an essence I like to make sure that I am calm and centered. You may even want to do a relaxation exercise like the recording provided in last month's issue.

Fill the bowl with the spring water and place the blooms floating on top, completely covering the surface. Place the bowl in a spot where it will be in totally uninterrupted sunlight for three to four hours, and then leave it alone. Go take a nap, or play with your kids. Read a book, maybe. The temptation for me is always to go stir it around or "check on it", but just leave it alone and let the sun do its thing.

When the time is up, you can carefully skim the blossoms out of the water and transfer your new essence into your bottle. I usually fill the container about two-thirds of the way, topping off the rest of the bottle with brandy. The brandy will prevent spoilage, as well as help to hold the plants vibration steady in the

water. Make sure to clearly label your bottle. Do as I say, not as I do here, because I cannot tell you how many unlabeled “mystery essences” I have had over the years because I thought I would remember what was in a particular colored or shaped bottle! Also, don’t worry if you have made your essence from a flower whose healing properties you are not familiar with, because next month we will be discussing the process of pinpointing the uses of unknown flower essences.

It should perhaps be noted that you might not want to use this month’s herb, stinging nettles, to practice with if you are not familiar with handling them. If you do decide to give it a try, though, there is a great deal to be learned from nettles essence. As in many cases, its properties as a flower essence or healing herb have much in common with the plant’s actual physical appearance. This idea is called the Doctrine of Signatures, and it has been studied and practiced by herbalists for many generations. For example, nettles have a tendency to grow in soil that is fertile, but has been disturbed in some way. In the same way, the nettles’ flower essence can be used to bring gentle change and healing to toxic situations and to relationships that have become disturbed. Likewise, in the same way live nettles’ sting says “Use Caution!” or even “Keep Away!”, its flower essence has the ability to provide us with psychic protection while healing a tendency to repeal or reject those we want to hold close.

If you decide to try making your own flower essences, just remember to have fun with it. There are no mistakes to be made, only lessons to be learned, and over time you will find the techniques that work best for you. There is much joy to be found in the exploration of flower essences, and I would love to hear of any especially amazing discoveries you make. Happy flower hunting!

You can let us know how your flower essence turned out by participating in the forums or visiting our Facebook page!



Nettle Herbal Infusion

Amanda Klenner

The term “Nourishing Herbal Infusion” was coined by renowned herbalist Susun Weed who says that the key to longevity, health, and wellness is linked to enjoying 2-4 cups of nourishing herbal infusion a day, using her four favorite herbs: stinging nettles, red clover, oat straw, and comfrey leaf. My favorite herbs for infusions are a bit different. I rotate stinging nettles, red clover, and alfalfa leaf.

What is a nourishing herbal infusion?

Nourishing herbal infusions are made with a large amount of dry herb matter (leaves, flowers, bark, or berries), about 1 oz or 1 cup in volume. You can enjoy your nourishing herbal infusion all day long, and Susun suggests drinking 1 cup 2-4 times a day. I just sip and enjoy my infusions throughout the day, starting first

thing in the morning for a great pick-me-up. You can refrigerate your infusion and enjoy it for up to 36 hours, at which point, if you still have some left, it makes a great plant fertilizer.

Nettle leaf infusion is by far my favorite. By steeping the nettle leaves for hours, we are allowing the water to extract vitamins and minerals from the plant matter into the water, which we then drink. This is by far my favorite way to “supplement” vitamins and minerals in my diet. I have Celiac disease which makes it very hard for my body to uptake nutrients from food and multi-vitamins. I find nourishing herbal infusions to be a wonderful way to get micro-nutrients into my body in a way that it can actually make use of.

Nettles are very supportive to the adrenal glands. They help the body better regulate stress and increase energy, not as a stimulant, but as a huge boost of nutrient-rich and energetic goodness. When you drink nettle leaf infusion you get a nice dose of calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, silicon, boron, zinc, and vitamins A, D, E, and K. This supports everything from your bones and cardiovascular system to your skin and hair, encouraging health and vitality throughout.

Susun Weed is a big believer in using herbs as simples, which is as simple as only engaging one at a time to get the full effects of just that herb. Although I enjoy a good simple nettle leaf infusion, oftentimes I combine nettles with other herbs I am working with for different issues in my life. As a mother, a business owner, and a person with, an auto-immune disease I combine herbs to provide the best benefits possible to my body.

Simple Nettle Infusion

Ingredients

- 1 oz dried nettle leaf
- 4 C boiling water

Directions

Place your nettles into a 1 quart mason jar. Fill the jar with boiling water, cap it tightly, and let it sit for at least four hours, preferably overnight. Strain the herbs by squeezing the liquid out of them the best you can, and enjoy your nourishing herbal infusion all day long.

Multi-Vitamin Tea

This tea is chalk full of vitamins and minerals and works well as a liquid multi-vitamin, especially for those who have nutrient absorption issues. This formula can be customized to meet your constitutional and other health needs as well, but this is my favorite basic formula. Remember, some vitamins such as vitamin D, E, and A are fat soluble and they will not be extracted in a tea. If you can, supplementing with a fermented cod liver oil is an easy and healthy way to get your fat soluble vitamins.

Ingredients

- 2 parts red raspberry leaf
- 2 parts rose hips
- 2 parts alfalfa leaf
- 2 parts red clover
- 1 part nettle leaf
- 1 part oat straw (omit if you have Celiac disease or gluten sensitivity)
- 1 part flavoring herbs (optional). Some good flavoring agents are: peppermint, spearmint, rosemary, chamomile, ginger, or cinnamon

Directions

I like to make a big batch of these herbs and store it in an air tight container. This way, I can just take a cup of the blend and toss it in a jar with some boiling water, cap it, and drink as usual. I enjoy this blend 2-3 times a week.

Daily Nourishing Adaptogenic Infusion

This is my go-to nourishing herbal infusion. The combination of nettle's adrenal supporting benefits and holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) makes a wonderful adaptogen that helps the body regulate stress on every level. Other than being an adaptogen, it is also antidepressant, antioxidant, antiviral, antibacterial, carminative, diuretic, expectorant, galactagogue, and an immunomodulator. I think you can see why I love this simple tea.

Ingredients

- ¾ oz dried nettle leaf
- ¼ oz holy basil
- 4 C boiling water

Directions

Follow the nourishing herbal infusion directions above.

Nervous System Tonic

Stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and general unhappiness are rampant in today's society. Lifestyle has a lot to do with it, but I also find people are not supporting their nervous system.

This formula is filled with nervines that will help nourish and support nervous system function. You can use all of these herbs or pick and choose what best works for you. Because I have Celiac disease I don't include milky oat in my blend, but I do include it when I make this blend for others. I do not include St. John's Wort for people on certain medications because it increases the rate of liver detoxification, which

can reduce the blood levels of some medications. Pick and choose what works for you.

Ingredients

- 1 part dried nettle leaf
- 1 part lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) – improves cognitive function, mood, irritability and forgetfulness, and stress headaches. It is also used to help improve sleep quality, ADHD, and SAD.
- 1 part milky oat seed (*Avena sativa*) – Milky oat seed is the immature seed of the common oat. At this time in the herb's growth it is a wonderful nervous system tonic and trophorestorative for the nervous system. *Avoid if you have Celiac disease.
- 1 part holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)
- ½ part St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) Flowers – St. John's Wort is often thought of as a "depression herb", but really it is a superb herb to support the nervous system. It is wonderful for anxiety and depression, melancholy, nerve pain, numbness, emotional unease, lethargy, apathy, and more. It is like the sun finally breaking through the gray and coming out to shine on you over a long winter. *Consult a knowledgeable herbal practitioner and medical doctor if you are on ***any*** medications as this herb enhances liver detoxification, which reduces blood levels of many medications.

Directions

Follow the nourishing herbal infusion directions above.

Hopefully these recipes will inspire you to go out and enjoy your own nourishing herbal infusion. Of course, the best place to start is with just a plain old nettle infusion, but don't feel like you are limited to that. Only the herbs are your limit, and there a whole lot of herbs out there. Enjoy!



History and Mythology of Nettles

– How Nettles got their Sting

Heather Lanham

Nettles, ah, nettles. I love them so much. I drink their nourishment in my morning tea and I grow nettles in my yard and sun room. When it is time to harvest I do so with much gratitude, and the few stings I get are easily remedied with a little juice from a crushed stem or leaf.

The most well-known story including nettles is by Hans Christian Anderson called "The Wild Swans". In the story, a princess must weave a coat for each of her brothers without speaking a word in order to break a curse that has turned them into swans. A string can be made of nettles, and they were once often used for making cloth, fishing nets, paper, sails, and textiles during and after the Neolithic period.

Hippocrates and his followers had some 61 recipes that utilized the nettle. The Greek physician Galen attributed nettle as being diuretic, a laxative, for gangrenous wounds, pneumonia, mouth sores, and many other ailments.

The Roman's supposedly brought a nettle species to Britain to increase their circulation so as to keep warm. "Take nettles and seethe them in oil, smear and rub the body with, the cold will depart" is an old saying that perhaps came from the Romans.

The nettle's animal totem is said to be the serpent, while Culpeper assigns it as being ruled by the planet Mars and claims it is hot and dry, both in the third degree. A nourishing tonic for one going through an ordeal, some use nettle tea as they work through emotional or spiritual ordeals. Citizens of ancient Egypt often used nettle tea for arthritis pains and lumbago.

Flogging oneself with nettles is referenced in many places, and today it is most often used for arthritis. Historically, Christians often practiced self-flagellation with nettles to better find God. Ancient Greek women flogged themselves with nettles at Easter to remind themselves of Christ's suffering.

Nettles have also been associated with lightning, as part of another version of the story below and as a link to the God Thor. Nettle was thrown on fires during storms as an offering to invoke protection.

Nettle is truly one of my most cherished plant allies.

I want to share a story about nettles that I read many years ago. This story has been around for a long time, I believe it is originally from the American Indians. The story is "How Nettles got their sting" or "The Plant of Gold".

How Nettles got their Sting or The Plant of Gold

Early in time, when no one owned land and water ran pure, many plants, animals, and humans lived in harmony. Time marched on and humans multiplied, filling more of the wild spaces. Some were nomadic, following herd migrations and harvesting plants and berries as part of their diets. There was a medium sized plant with smooth leaves and large, lovely blooms of blue. All parts of this plant were edible so the plant was very desirable. With its large roots for roasting, leaves that were perfect for stews, and flowers that were a delight raw or prepared in near any manner. The stems of the plant were also good for creating cloth and rope.

People were cautious in the beginning. They always made sure to leave plenty behind and to strew the seeds about ensuring the propagation of the plant. The people gave thanks for the gifts of the plant and left offerings when they harvested. As time passed the people stopped giving thanks, they stopped strewing the seeds, and they harvested all of the plant they could find.

Finally the plant cried out to the Great Spirit. "Please help me, near all my children are gone and I grow weak. Other plants are taking over and I haven't seeds to scatter anymore. I will be gone next spring, you are my only hope." The Great Spirit heard, and was angry with the people. He set a huge storm to brewing causing the people to hide in fear of what they had done. Lightning struck the last plant and bits of light flew from the plant all over the ground. Everywhere the light hit, new plants sprouted. The plant had been transformed. The leaves were cut and toothy, the flowers were now small and difficult to see, the plant had also become taller, tiny hairs covered the plant and stung any who

touched it, and the roots were no longer huge but fine and hair-like.

The great changes in the plant caused fear in the people for a time. Eventually the people learned to respect the plant; harvesting only what was needed and giving thanks. Seeds were scattered by the people again and helped the plant to grow into abundance. The plant kept its stinging hair, and even now people are reminded not to be greedy every time they are stung.

Resources

- http://www.plantlives.com/docs/U/Urtica_pilulifera.pdf
- <http://www.spiritdaily.net/flogging.htm>
- http://www.herballegacy.com/Vance_History.html
- http://www.naturalhealthcourses.com/Reading_Room/Nettles_Weeds_Wonders.htm
- <http://ladyraw.com/herbs-benefits/my-thesis-stinging-nettle/>



Nettles for Self Care and Nourishment

Darcey Blue

Stinging nettles, a beloved ally to herbalists the world over, is considered one of our most nourishing tonics for daily use. In fact many of us use nettles as food and medicine because of its gentle actions and deep nutrition. The fibrous stems have been used to make rope and twine, and nettles have even been used to curdle milk and make cheese. Its nature is very versatile and generally friendly to human needs. But these plants are also an amazing ally for teaching us about taking care of ourselves and perceiving and focusing on our lives.

Have you ever visited a strand of stinging nettles? They stand 3—6 feet tall and are covered with stinging hairs that will leave a rash or a welt on the skin if you brush up against them. This is not

an allergic reaction, but the result of the formic acid and the tiny hairs that inject it into our skin like a needle. The rash only lasts a few days at most. It itches and tingles, and then fades. But any plant that has such defenses has some things to teach us!

One of the primary ways that nettle can share its medicine with us is in the department of our self-care and self-nourishment. On a very basic level, this medicine is physically about nourishment—minerals, vitamins, deep green life energy from the Earth. It often grows near water sources as well. It encourages us to take more responsibility for our health and well-being by being conscious of what we put in our body and conscious of how we are connected with the Earth, our primary source of energetic, spiritual, emotional, and physical nourishment. Ultimately, it is up to us to care for ourselves, to provide ourselves with healthy food, nourishing relationships, and invigorating movement for our body. Nettles is a strong sister who stands up straight, unafraid to share her gifts or set a uniquely strong example of drawing deep nourishment from the Earth and water. She is able to share her deep, vibrant energy with those who respect her. When you feel the need to connect with the energy of the deep nourishment of the Earth, then turn to strong nettle sister as a vibrant ally and as an example and teacher for how to provide nourishment and care for your body, mind, and spirit.

But just as nettles teaches us about self-care and nourishment, nettles also teaches us about boundaries, something many of us lack or have weakness in. The stalks, flowers, and leaves are covered with a multitude of stinging hairs, which demand to be noticed when you overstep your boundaries or do not pay attention to where nettle is growing. These are not the boundaries of a hawthorn with vicious thorns that threaten to take out the eyes of those who would betray. Instead, they act as a gentle

reminder that can be given to those in our lives. A reminder to be conscious about their care and treatment of us, how to respect our limitation, and that a little prickle reminder is warranted when respect has been overlooked. The prickly boundaries don't prevent the nettle from sharing its wealth with those who respect its gifts and pay attention to how they interact, but it is enough to be a reminder to those who have let their attention stray or their respect wane. We too must be able to allow healthy sharing with those in our lives who respect and honor our needs and boundaries, and give a healthy and noticeable (not overly reactive) reminder when our boundaries have been overstepped. Tune into the prickly hairs that protect the nettle gently but effectively when you need to call up a healthy image of boundary respect in your life.

Nettles also asks us to pay attention, to stay focused, and to be conscious of where we are putting our focus and investing our mental energy. I have collected nettles and nettle seeds many times and in many different environments over my years as an herbalist. In gardens, in the middle of a wild wet mountain seep, and in old horse pastures.

One thing that the nettle continually reminds me of is where I am putting my focus and energy. I generally like to harvest nettles with my bare hands, though even with gloves on the lesson comes through for me. If my attention wavers even just a little, to my life's latest drama or money trouble, nettle is sure to give me a few stings to remind me, "Hey sister, be present, pay attention, this is your life. Right in the moment with me, the nettles, the sun, and the wind in your hair." When I wear gloves it is easier to wander away from the present moment, and nettles will sting my legs or the bare parts of my arms. Even in a strong breeze one might whack my cheek with a little sting. And I inevitably exclaim,

“Ouch!” and then laugh, because nettles nature and message is generally friendly, but doesn’t really let you get away with drifting. It asks me to be in the present moment, to direct my focus and attention away from those things in life which become a drain on my energy, or that cannot be changed or fixed in the moment. It reminds me to not try to do too many things at once and to choose consciously where I am investing my mental energy.

Because the nature of our universe, what you think, say, and see within your mind, what you invest your energy in, is what you attract more of in your life. If you spend all day worrying about money trouble and stress, you will see more money trouble and stress in your life.

If you can focus your thoughts on the present moment, and on what you DO wish to create in your life, you will begin to direct more of your valuable energy to creating the situations and solutions rather than the problems. So, bring nettles into your life. Make a nettle flower essence, take a gentle wander through the nettle patch, or experience a nettle spirit journey to take a look at how you are investing your mental energy and focus. Are you tuned into the present moment and the gifts before you, or are you focused on worry and turmoil of things you cannot control?



Nettle for Skincare

Amanda Klenner

The very first herb class I took was a 1-day intensive on spring herbs near my home in Spokane. I can't recall the herbalist's name now, but the amount of information she packed into a one day class was amazing. She brought in four grocery bags of freshly picked nettle leaf as well as comfrey leaf and root, and together we made a day of it. We drank teas and made oils, tinctures, salves, and more. It was such a fun experience learning how to use these herbs hands-on, and it taught me the proper respect and handling of nettles.

Making your own herbal remedies is so fulfilling and so much fun! Salves are made in my home all the time. I love the way they smell and I LOVE the way they work. They are also incredibly easy to make and customize.

I adore using nettle for skin issues. When I first started studying herbs I was pretty much on my own. The great thing about this is that no one told me what I should or shouldn't do, which is how I came up with this formula. I figured, after reading, that if nettles are good for allergies, are anti-inflammatory, act as an anti-histamine, and are astringent, then they should be good for skin right? I was right and nettles have a place in most of my healing skin salves.

In addition to nettle, I also use plantain because it is wonderful for skin wounds, inflammation, ulcers, cuts, stings, and swelling. You will find a lot of people make salves with chickweed instead of plantain. This also works well, but I prefer plantain because it is foolproof to find and has such a wonderful affinity to the skin and wound healing.

Calendula is one of those flowers that is used all by itself to make a wonderful salve. It helps reduce pain, inflammation, allergic reactions, is anti-rheumatic, an anti-histamine, and astringent. These three herbs combined are a power house of skin healing goodness.

This is a simple variation of my favorite skin salve. I find it works well for any dry, itchy skin conditions, cuts, scrapes, and scratches. If there is a skin issue in the house, inevitably a variation of this salve goes on it.

Ingredients

- 1/3 C nettle leaf
- 1/3 C plantain leaf
- 1/3 C calendula flowers
- 2 C olive oil – sometimes I will do 1 cup of olive oil and 1 cup of coconut oil
- essential oils (optional) – lavender, melaleuca, frankincense
- A glass Pyrex measuring cup or quart sized mason jar with a lid

Directions

Place your herbs into the glass Pyrex measuring cup or jar and pour your oil over it. Stir the herbs so that they are well incorporated into the oil.

Place the measuring cup in a sauce pan and add enough to reach the sides of the glass, but not splash over into the oil. Water and oil don't mix so you don't want any in the oil, you just want the water on the sides so it can warm the oil/herb mixture. This is a DIY type of the double boiler method.

Turn your stove top on medium/low (around 3 of 10). Allow the heat to infuse the herbs all day if you can, or at least 3 hours.

Remove the herbal oil from the heat, strain the herbs from the oil in a fine mesh strainer lined with cheese cloth, squeeze all of the oil out, and store your oil in a cool dry place. I like to store mine in a mason jar.

Take 1 cup of the oil and place that in another glass Pyrex bowl or mason jar, add 1 oz of bees wax, and melt it in the same DIY double boiler method as used before. Once it is all incorporated, remove from the heat, add essential oils if you are using them, and then pour your mixture into a salve container and let it cool.

Label it and enjoy!



Nettles for Hair

Angela Justis

Healthy hair is a joy to have. It is a beautiful crown that reflects the health within. There are many herbal allies to lend a hand if you want long, luscious hair. Nettle is one of these wonderful plants finding use both internally and topically in nourishing a lovely head of hair.

When I began my learning as a student in herb school, my classmates and I were quickly introduced to lady nettle. Soon every desk had a jar of nettle infusion on it for sipping throughout the day. I remember going to visit my long-time hair stylist for a trim a month or so after learning about nettle and she was shocked at how much my hair had grown. As she ran her hands through my hair exclaimed, "What have you been doing? Your hair has grown so much!" I thought about it and the only thing I came

up with was, nettles! I had been drinking nettle infusion at least 3 times a week. Sure I had sometimes combined nettle with other herbs such as oatstraw or raspberry, but I had always included nettle leaf in my brew.

Stinging nettles, with its deep, dark richness, pulls nourishing vitamins and minerals from the depths of the earth right up into their leaves. These nutrients provide the perfect food for healthy hair growth from the inside out. Topically, nettle leaf stimulates hair growth and circulation as well as balancing oil production, easing inflammation, and generally benefiting the scalp. The seeds and roots also have a helpful action upon the hair by acting as a scalp tonic. Susun Weed explains that nettle seeds used both internally and topically help to heal sores and afflictions on the scalp.¹ She also tells us that the root prepared as a decoction or tincture and rubbed on the scalp will help stimulate hair growth and alleviate scalp irritations such as dandruff and infections.² Weed explains that "the mild hormonal effect of nettle leaf or seed taken internally strengthens the effect of the external applications."³ Excellent wise woman advice! In fact, recent research has shown that nettle root preparations (particularly in combination with pygeum) may inhibit enzymes that contribute to hormonal production involved in certain types of hair loss.⁴

How to Use Nettles for Fabulous Hair

There are several ways to use nettles to promote strong healthy hair growth both internally and topically. My favorite is to simply drink nettles prepared as a strong infusion a few times a week. I often like to add other tasty vitamin rich herbs such as oatstraw,

¹ Susun Weed, Healing Wise pg. 178

² Susun Weed, Healing Wise pg. 179

³ Susun Weed, Healing Wise pg. 179

⁴ hairlosstalk.com

raspberry leaf, alfalfa, or red clover. Drinking infusions is delicious, hydrating, simple, and effective! Another simple way to incorporate nettles into your diet is to throw a handful of dried leaves into soups, grains, and crockpot meals while cooking. The leaves will blend right in and lend a nice rich taste to your food. Or create delicious nettle meals with some of the recipes offered here in Natural Herbal Living!

If you are lucky enough to have fresh nettles at your disposal, you can gently whack your scalp with the stinging stems to encourage hair growth. The stinging stimulates circulation directly to the scalp and relieves inflammation. Other less intense topical applications of nettle leaf, root, and seed will also benefit your hair and scalp, greatly aiding growth and balancing the scalp. Here are a couple of recipes to help you along your way.

Super Easy Nettle Hair Rinse

Ingredients

- 1 C of nettle leaf infusion

Directions

Can't get any easier! Just pour this on your scalp after bathing. Massage in and let dry.

Nettle & Rosemary Rinse

Rosemary is also very beneficial for hair, stimulating growth and leaving it lustrous, making it a great addition to hair tonic recipes.

Ingredients

- 2 heaping Tbs nettle leaf
- 2 heaping Tbs rosemary leaf
- 1 quart of boiling hot water
- 2 Tbs apple cider vinegar, optional—helps to balance scalp pH
- 2 to 4 drops of rosemary essential oil

Directions

Steep the nettle and rosemary in the water for at least 15 minutes and up to a couple of hours. Be sure to cover while it steeps to keep the essential oils in! Strain out the herbs and add the rosemary essential oil. Use by the cup full to rinse your hair at the end of bathing or rub a bit into your scalp a couple times a day. Keep refrigerated between uses.

Nettle Hair Lotion

Ingredients

- 1 oz of dried herbs, such as nettle leaf, nettle root, rosemary, peppermint, lavender, or other herbs mixed together to equal 1 oz total
- 1 qt of apple cider vinegar
- lavender and/or rosemary essential oils

Directions

Mix the herbs and apple cider vinegar together in a jar. Cover with a non-metal lid and set aside for at least a week. Shake daily. Then strain the out the herbs and reserve the resulting liquid. Add 10 drops total of essential oil, mixing the lavender and rosemary as you see fit. To use: shake well and then mix up to ¼ cup of vinegar with a cup of water. Use to rinse your hair and scalp. Massaging into your scalp for maximum goodness. You can follow with a rinse of water or leave the vinegar as the final rinse. Don't worry the vinegar smell fades away and leaves you with lovely hair!

Nettle Hair Oil

Ingredients

- ½ ounce each dried nettle leaf, rosemary leaf, and lavender flowers
- olive oil
- 10 to 20 drops of essential oils such as rosemary, lavender, ylang, or cedarwood, which are all wonderful for hair care, optional

Directions

Pack the herbs into a quart jar and cover with olive oil. Poke the herbs down into the oil. Add more as the herbs absorb the oil. Leave to infuse either in the dark or on a sunny window sill (it is up to you) for 2 to 4 weeks. Strain out the herbs. I like to use cheesecloth in a big strainer for doing this. Blend in the essential oils if you are using them. Store your beautiful hair oil in a dark jar with a dropper. To use, massage a few drops of the oil into your scalp and hair. You can do this before bed if you'd like and wash out in the morning. Or you can even rub it right into your hair daily. A good friend of mine with very curly, coarse hair loves to use this as a daily moisturizer.

Resources

Books

- Lawless, Julia, *The Encyclopaedia of Essential Oils*, Element Books Limited, 1992
- Mars, Brigitte, *Herbs for Healthy Skin, Hair & Nails*, Keats Publishing, Inc., 1998
- Rose, Jeanne, *Jeanne Rose's Herbal Body Book*, The Putnam Publishing Group, 1976
- Weed, Susun S., *Healing Wise*, Ash Tree Publishing, 1989

Websites

- <http://www.hairlosstalk.com/hair-loss-news/News-sid-248-file-article-pageid-1.php>



Cucumber Nettle Soap Recipe

Jan Berry

This cold process soap combines the skin soothing properties of cucumbers, nettle, and French green clay to make a gentle, unscented bar suitable for use by those with sensitive skin.

If you've never made soap from scratch before, be sure to read more on the process before following this recipe. There are many tutorials and videos online, plus your local library should be able to provide you with helpful books.

Ingredients

- 1.5 oz avocado oil
- 1.5 oz castor oil
- 7 oz coconut oil
- 12 oz olive oil

- 5 oz sunflower oil
- 3.75 oz lye (sodium hydroxide)
- 9 oz liquid (see directions below)
- dried nettle leaves
- ¼ C chopped cucumber peel
- French green clay

All measurements are calculated by weight in this recipe. It's sized to fit a column mold, such as this one:

<http://www.brambleberry.com/Silicone-Column-Mold-P5619.aspx>

This mold is by Bramble Berry.

Directions

To start, make a strong nettle tea by pouring 1 cup of simmering water over 2 tablespoons dried nettle, cover with a saucer, and let infuse until cool enough to handle. Transfer to the refrigerator to finish cooling. (I let mine sit overnight.)

In the meantime, puree ¾ cup water with ¼ cup chopped cucumber peel, then strain, and store in refrigerator until nettle tea is cool. Add the cold tea to the cucumber juice, to reach a weight of 9 ounces.

Following standard safety measures, including proper gear such as gloves, goggles, and long sleeves, measure out 3.75 ounces of lye (sodium hydroxide) and carefully add to the nettle/cucumber tea.

Set aside in a safe place until it has reached between 100 to 125 degrees.

While the lye is cooling, grind up nettle leaves in a coffee grinder then sift through a fine mesh sieve to obtain a dark green powder. Measure out one to two tablespoons (more = darker color, less =

lighter color.) Measure out ½ tablespoon green French clay and set aside.

In a stainless steel or enamel lined pan (never use aluminum when making soap), add the avocado oil, castor oil, coconut oil, olive oil, and sunflower oil.

Gently heat the oils until they've reached somewhere between 100 to 125 degrees. Once your lye and oil temperatures are within about ten degrees of each other, you're ready to mix!

Carefully pour the lye mixture into the warm oils. Blend with a stick blender for about thirty seconds, then add one to two tablespoons of nettle powder. Blend for thirty more seconds before adding the ½ tablespoon of French green clay.

Continue blending until trace is reached. "Trace" means that the mixture is thick enough so that when you lift the stick blender from the pot, the soap mixture that drizzles down leaves a faint outline or "trace" before sinking under the surface. This usually takes around five minutes or less.

Pour into your prepared mold, cover, and let sit for twenty four hours before unmolding. If using a column mold, allow the uncut soap to harden a few extra days before slicing into bars.

Allow your soap to cure for four to six weeks and then it is ready to use, share, and give as gifts!



Nettle Sauerkraut Recipe

Darcey Blue

Did you know that naturally fermented cabbage, as in sauerkraut, makes all the vitamins and minerals in cabbage more bioavailable? Vitamins C, B, and K become more readily available in sauerkraut, and it is also a rich source of the minerals calcium and magnesium. Not only that, but when you ferment and culture cabbage in the lacto-fermentation process it is also considered a living food, full of probiotic friendly flora for your digestive system. The lactobacilli organisms are much like those that culture yogurt, and have many health benefits including improving digestion, immune function, and vitamin and mineral absorption by the GI tract.

When you combine the health promoting power of lacto-fermented vegetables like cabbage with the nutritional powerhouse of

nettles, which are rich in minerals like potassium, calcium, iron, vitamin K, your home fermented sauerkraut becomes a superfood of the finest quality! Making fermented vegetables at home is easy and requires no fancy equipment.

Ingredients

- 1 half gallon canning jar
- 2 medium cabbages (green or red)
- 4 Tbsp sea salt or pickling salt
- 2-3 C dried nettles (fresh is just as good, but chop well and remove stems)
- 1 Tbsp caraway seeds
- 1 tsp juniper berries

Directions

First, shred or chop cabbage into thin strips, either by hand or with a food processor. Place the cabbage in a very large bowl or pot in layers with salt, caraway, juniper, and nettles, until all the ingredients are in the bowl. With clean hands, massage, knead, and mix the cabbage, salt, and spices together, until the cabbage begins to release its juices. This should take 5-10 minutes.

Begin to transfer the salted cabbage & nettle mixture into the large jar and press down firmly. Fill the jar completely full and continually press down to compact all the air out. The juice should come up to the top of the cabbage and cover it. If not, you may add 1-2 tablespoons of filtered water to cover the cabbage. (You may use a clean, sterile stone to hold the cabbage down in the jar)

Place a lid loosely over the top of the jar, and place the jar in a dish to catch overflow. Leave in a warm place for one month. The liquid will overflow, and it is good to periodically press the

cabbage down again to make sure it stays under the level of the liquid.

After 1 month, scrape off any white mold that may have grown. Any cabbage below the brine level is fine to consume. Remove the stone if you have used one, and store your nettle kraut in a cool place, your refrigerator, or a cold cellar. Eat 2-3 Tbsp 1-2 times daily with meals, and enjoy!



Resources

For more info on fermentation:

<http://www.wildfermentation.com/>



Grabbing the Nettles

Stinging Nettle Gnocchi Recipe

Jessica Morgan

"Many would agree that it would be better to return from a trip to the country with a bag of nettles than with bunches of wild flowers!"

Probably true, but I say, why not return with both? And then make something extra special like nettle pesto, or nettle infused sel gris, or nettle gnocchi. And then sit around the table with a beautiful bouquet of wildflowers too. Hmm? Oh, yes. I love this time of year when so many of our wild greens—including the nettles—are in full abundance and free for the picking. Nettles can be harvested in the spring and consumed just like any other leafy green for months at a time. And if you have a secret patch, you

can treat them like cut-and-come-again greens, trimming the tops every week or so! They just keep on re-growing, and I keep on grabbing.

You know, stinging nettles may present a harsh exterior, but I think it's just to conceal its ooey-gooey, incredible goodness. There is something seductive about an herb that can be so dangerous and yet so healthy at the same time. Don't you think? I do, and I think nettles teach us that appearance can be deceptive; that sometimes something uncomfortable can transform into something treasured, something valuable. Did you know nettles are replacing kale as the superfood of the moment, boasting the highest levels of protein and plant-digestible iron of any other green? And it's high in silica, vitamins A, B, C, D, and K, as well as calcium, potassium, and manganese. And this super green contains lots of protein, too. See, incredible goodness!

Furthermore, nettles are more than just a green. They are loaded with phytonutrients and have an array of beneficial medicinal properties. Whenever we eat a meal, we should also be eating good amounts of medicinal greens. The two should be synonymous with each other. Why not have medicinally loaded meals? We must appreciate that we need these medicinally packed greens in our lives to stay healthy, and adding them to our diets is one of the most effective measures we can take to assist our bodies in detoxing and toning, nourishing and alkalizing, and protecting against the constant battle of pathogenic assaults and degenerative processes. Nettles are medicines. Beautiful medicines. Yummy medicines. Powerful medicines. And some of the most important food medicines for daily use. Remember, food is medicine, and nettles are food, so drink a mug full of nettle tea, toss some nettles into your chicken soup along with the parsley, dump a handful of nettles in your bean pot or bone broth, make

an omelet, freeze some, hang a bunch to dry, and make this amazing plant part of your life.



Oh, and don't forget that if you do happen upon a bumper crop of nettles you can simply dry them in small bunches for extended use as an herbal infusion throughout the season, especially allergy season. It's no secret that nettles are valuable for those dreaded spring allergies, and they are a natural anti-histamine alternative, making it useful for sniffles, itchy eyes, scratchy throat, or even skin reactions. Plus, this long known medicinal and culinary herb is great for pregnancy health and breast-feeding as well as treating a myriad of other conditions that range from

arthritis to moodiness. Eating them is not only valuable nutritionally, but medicinally and emotionally too.

I wait eagerly every spring for the nettles to pop up in the little wild areas around my home, or for my local farmer friends to have it available so that I can get my hands on the fresh stuff. I often use it in place of spinach, kale, or Swiss chard for as long as the season permits. Since now is the time for spring nettles, try out one of my favorite ways to add a whole lot of nettle love to my kitchen.

Stinging Nettle Gnocchi Recipe



Some say making pasta from scratch is a bit daunting but gnocchi is quite easy, and is definitely better than anything from a box. Plus, gnocchi is simple to prepare and can be made in large quantities and frozen for further use. For this recipe, you can wild harvest your own stinging nettles or buy some fresh from your farmers' market or co-op. If you have some available in your freezer from the season before that would work just as well. I've never tried it with reconstituted dry herb, but it may be worth a try!

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb fresh stinging nettles tops, rinsed, trimmed, and blanched for 5 minutes, until soft and tender. Or, 1 C cooked nettles
- 3 good sized russet potatoes, peeled, cubed, boiled, and mashed
- 2 egg yolks
- about 1 C of chosen flour: oat, millet, coconut, all-purpose, etc.
- salt and pepper, to taste

Suggested Instructions

I say suggested because it seems making gnocchi is not an exact science, and a little more of this or that is OK. Actually I like to think of these instructions more like guidelines as the important thing is to get a feel for the dough. I don't think I've ever used the same amount of flour twice, and this is especially true when adding a wet ingredient such as boiled nettles to the mix.

1. Boil the potatoes until tender, drain, and mash really well. Not whipped, just mashed.

2. Gloves are recommended for nettle processing, unless of course you're more on the brave side! Put about half an inch of water in the bottom of a large stockpot and bring to a boil. Add your stinging nettles with tongs, cover, and cook for about two minutes. Quickly cool them under cold running water. After squeezing all the water out of the cooked nettles, whiz them around in a food processor or blender for a few seconds, or chop finely and then stir them into the potatoes.

3. Turn the potato mixture onto a floured surface, and make a well in the center. Add the two egg yolks and the flour, and slowly work the potatoes, nettles, and flour until a soft ball forms. Try not to overwork or you'll have a big, glutinous mess. The secret of good gnocchi is to use sufficient flour to hold the mixture together but not too much that they become heavy. If the dough does not feel too sticky, break off a piece and roll it into a ball, drop it into boiling water to test. If after a few minutes it floats to the top without losing its shape, then do not add more flour. Otherwise add a bit more flour.

4. To shape: Using your hands, roll the dough out like a snake, roughly 1/2-3/4 inches thick (covering with flour if necessary). Using a knife, cut 1/2 inch pieces and set aside on a floured baking sheet. Continue until all the dough is portioned into gnocchi. If you do not plan on cooking all the gnocchi at once, then the excess can be put onto a floured cookie sheet and placed in the freezer until frozen, and then transferred to a freezer bag.

5. For a traditional fancy gnocchi, flour the back of a fork and, with your thumb, roll the individual gnocchi off the back of the fork creating little ridges on one side. These ridges will help hold your sauce. I tend to just toss them in the boiling pot as is.

6. To Cook, bring a large saucepan of water to boil, drop about 12 gnocchi at a time into the pan, and cook until they have all floated to the surface. This usually takes about 3 minutes. Then lift them out with a slotted spoon, place them on a hot plate, and repeat with the remaining gnocchi. I like to serve my gnocchi simple, either buttered up or with olive oil, pepper, and shaved cheese! But honestly, any sauce will do! Yum!!

Enjoy!





Nettles for Every Season

Carol Little

I do so love nettles. The abundance of this powerful plant—thought to be a useless weed by many—is one of the earth’s gifts to us, and has never been more important than now. So many of us are rushing about with long to-do lists, filling up on coffee to help us get going every morning and then adding in even more coffee or cola for ongoing caffeine support. It may be time that we stopped to find something more nutritionally beneficial to our bodies.

Stinging nettles are probably the most nutritionally-dense plant on Mother Earth. Rich in protein, trace minerals, and vitamins, it has the ability to restore energy by working deep within the body on our zapped adrenal glands. Miss nettle has several mechanisms of action and can move her deep healing powers to all of the cells in

our body. That is, if we can ingest enough! I am fond of saying that herbs can indeed change our lives if we take the correct herb, the best version possible, and enough of it. We also can't forget to take it longer than we think is necessary. In this case, the trick is to ensure that we have nettle often. It becomes a habit to find ways to incorporate nourishing herbs like the stinging nettle into our daily lives. Sometimes that's a challenge. Here are some ideas to help you to make this delightful green lady an integral part of your life.

Each season offers a different idea. Currently it's still winter for many of us, which may leave us short of fresh nettle. Dried nettles, made into herbal tea, alone, or mixed with other supportive herbs can be a delicious part of your day. Long infusion nettles, which you can locate in the article [Nettle Herbal Infusion](#) in this issue, is definitely a part of many of my winter days. I make it in the evenings and enjoy it the following morning. I don't find that it needs a sweetener, but some folks prefer other accompanying flavors, and that's fine too. This long infusion will be an important addition to a nourishing nettle program.

I have a series of nettle concoctions which allow me to add nettle's gifts to my day. As I mentioned, each season has a nettles project! I hope that you will enjoy this mini-collection of my own personal likes throughout the seasons.

In the spring, I collect fresh nettles, and enjoy them steamed with a little butter, a dash of sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper. Anyway that you would prepare spinach, collards, or Swiss chard can also be used for nettles. I make a delicious stir-fried dandelion greens dish in the spring and, when possible, I add nettles to the dandelions. I also make pesto with nettles! Just use your imagination and enjoy.

Nettle Pesto

Ingredients

- 1 large bunch of fresh dandelion leaves
- 2 large handfuls of nettle leaves
- 2 oz almonds (or nut of your choice)
- 4 oz parmesan cheese, grated
- 4 oz olive oil (use highest quality you can find)

Directions

Place the greens into a pot of boiling water for a minute or so. Strain into a colander in the sink and douse with cold water.

Put the greens into your food processor (or blender) and add the nuts and the cheese. Begin processing and then add enough olive oil to allow the machine to do its work. When the mixture forms a paste-like consistency, add the remaining olive oil.

Pour the mixture into a large jar or container with lid. I tend to use canning jars with good lids.

Store in the fridge.

Note

I have also made this pesto without the cheese. I then pour it into ice cube trays and freeze overnight. After frozen, the pesto cubes go into a labeled bag in my freezer. I add the cheese when using later, or not at all. These pesto cubes are ready to add to any soups, stews, sauces, or stir-fries. They offer the additional nourishment of nettle in an easy-to-use power-packed cube.

Herbalists love to infuse herbs!

In spring and summertime every year, I infuse fresh herbs in vinegar to add herbal goodness to my meals. I use herbal vinegars in salads of course, but also find that they are delicious when added to soups, stews, and sauces and as a marinade ingredient for vegetable or meat dishes.

We can choose to infuse fresh or dried nettles in vinegar. If you're able to, use fresh nettles. I make time each year to make this with fresh plant material, as it is preferable. I tend to use good quality apple cider vinegar but you may choose whichever vinegar you prefer.

Try this recipe with fresh nettles this spring. I would suggest using gloves to protect your hands.

Nettles in Vinegar

Ingredients

- freshly harvested nettles—enough to fill a glass jar
- apple cider vinegar, or vinegar of choice

Directions

First you'll need to harvest the nettles. I harvest the top 1/3 of the plant.

Use the stems and leaves. Put the nettles into a glass jar and pack the plant material in. Now fill the jar with vinegar. If using a metal lid, use a small square of waxed paper to avoid the vinegar and lid touching.

Place in a sunny window or in a warm cupboard and shake the jar from time to time. Your vinegar is ready to use after a month, although some like to let it sit for 6 weeks or more. Check the jar during this time to ensure that the nettles are fully submerged in the vinegar. Top up with vinegar if needed.

Another easy nettle project, and one that gets rave reviews from my friends, is Port wine infused with nettle leaves and a few other flavors. Yum!

You can make adjustments here, but this is what I have made for almost 20 years.

Nettles in Port

Ingredients

- 1 liter (or approximately 1 quart) of Port
- 4-6 handfuls of nettle leaves (fresh is best)
- 8-10 prunes
- 2 cups raisins
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- optional ingredients include cranberries, dried apricots, dried apples

*Ensure any/all of these dried fruits are dried without chemicals.

Directions

You will also need 1 large glass jar with lid. Add all the ingredients above and then add the port. Ensure that all plant material is covered with the port. Allow the wine to steep for 4-6 weeks and then strain. I serve this in small cordial glasses as a mineral-building tasty treat.

When the seasons change and fresh nettle is not available, there are also tasty options for well-dried nettles. The easiest idea is to simply sprinkle crumbles of dried nettles into food as you might use parsley. You can also mix dried nettles with other herbs to make your own seasonings! I love to play with herbal combinations to create condiments. Here's an old family favorite for you to try. It's easy to make and very nutritious.

Nettles Gomasio

Ingredients

- 4 Tbs nettles, dried and crumbled
- 4 Tbs sesame seeds
- 4 Tbs dulse seaweed

Directions

Toast the sesame seeds in a dry frying pan over low to medium heat until slightly golden. Add the crumbled dulse and nettles and very lightly toast, stirring gently. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

Store the mixture in a glass jar. I tend to use canning jars with tight-fitting lids. Store in a dark cupboard and take a small amount and fill a shaker container. Keep it handy and use it often. This mixture is delicious and easy to use in your meals. But don't stop there, there are still additional add-on ideas? What tastes do you like? Sometimes I add some red pepper flakes. We are only limited by our imagination!

No matter what the season, consider miss nettles as a trusted green ally. Whichever way you take her, just remember to enjoy her lots. If you can begin to create a series of nettles concoctions, you may find that you do indeed benefit from this most amazing herb!

A Glossary of Herbalism

Nina Katz

Do you feel befuddled by all of those terms? Are you curious about what a menstruum might be, or a nervine? Wondering what the exact difference is between an infusion and a decoction? Or what it means to macerate? Read on; the herbalist lexicographer will reveal it all!

Adaptogen n. An herb that enhances one's ability to thrive despite stress. Eleuthero, or Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) is a well-known adaptogen.

Aerial parts n. pl. The parts of a plant that grow above ground. Stems, leaves, and flowers are all aerial parts, in contrast to roots and rhizomes.

Alterative n. An herb that restores the body to health gradually and sustainably by strengthening one or more of the body's systems, such as the digestive or lymphatic system, or one or more of the vital organs, such as the liver or kidneys. Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) is an alternative.

adj. Restoring health gradually, as by strengthening one or more of the body's systems or vital organs.

Anthelmintic n. A substance that eliminates intestinal worms.

Anthelmin adj. Being of or concerning a substance that eliminates intestinal worms.

Anti-catarrhal n. A substance that reduces or slows down the production of phlegm.
adj. Being of or concerning a substance that reduces or slows down the production of phlegm.

Anti-emetic n. A substance that treats nausea. Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is anti-emetic.
adj. Being of or concerning a substance that treats nausea.

Anti-microbial n. An herb or a preparation that helps the body fight off microbial infections, whether viral, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic. Herbal anti-microbials may do this by killing the microbes directly, but more often achieve this by enhancing immune function and helping the body to fight off disease and restore balance.
adj. Being of or concerning an herb or a preparation that helps the body fight off microbial infections.

Aperient n. A gentle laxative, such as seaweed, plantain seeds (*Plantago spp.*), or ripe bananas.
adj. Being of or concerning a gentle laxative.

Aphrodisiac n. A substance that enhances sexual interest or desire.
adj. Being of or relating to a substance that enhances sexual interest or desire.

Astringent n. A food, herb, or preparation that causes tissues to constrict, or draw in. Astringents help stop bleeding, diarrhea, and other conditions in which some bodily substance is flowing excessively. Some astringents, such as Wild Plantain (*Plantago major*), draw so powerfully that they can remove splinters.

 adj Causing tissues to constrict, and thereby helping to stop excessive loss of body fluids.

Bitter n. A food, herb, or preparation that stimulates the liver and digestive organs through its bitter flavor. Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and Gentian (*Gentiana lutea*) are both bitters. Also called *digestive bitter*.

Carminative n. A food, herb, or preparation that reduces the buildup or facilitates the release of intestinal gases. Cardamom (*Amomum spp. and Elettaria spp*) and Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) are carminatives.

 adj. Characterized as reducing the buildup or facilitating the release of intestinal gases.

Carrier Oil n. A non-medicinal oil, such as olive or sesame oil, used to dilute an essential oil.

Catarrh n. An inflammation of the mucous membranes resulting in an overproduction of phlegm.

Compound v. To create a medicinal formula using two or more components.

n. An herbal preparation consisting of two or more herbs.

Compress n. A topical preparation consisting of a cloth soaked in a liquid herbal extract, such as an infusion or decoction, and applied, usually warm or hot, to the body. A washcloth soaked in a hot ginger decoction and applied to a sore muscle is a compress.

Decoct v. To prepare by simmering in water, usually for at least 20 minutes. One usually decocts barks, roots, *rhizomes*, hard seeds, twigs, and nuts.

Decoction n. An herbal preparation made by simmering the plant parts in water, usually for at least 20 minutes.

Demulcent n. An herb with a smooth, slippery texture soothing to the mucous membranes, i.e. the tissues lining the respiratory and digestive tracts. Slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), marshmallow root (*Althaea officinalis*), and sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*, *Sassafras officinale*) are all demulcents.

adj. Having a smooth, slippery texture that soothes the mucous membranes.

Diaphoretic n. An herb or preparation that opens the pores of the skin, facilitates sweat, and thereby lowers fevers. In Chinese medicine, diaphoretics are said to “release the exterior.”• Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is a diaphoretic.

adj. Opening the pores, facilitating sweat, and thereby lowering fevers.

Digestive n. An herb, food, or preparation that promotes the healthy breakdown, assimilation, and elimination of food, as by gently stimulating the digestive tract in preparation for a meal. Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and bitter salad greens are digestives.

adj. 1 Concerning or being part of the bodily system responsible for the breakdown, assimilation, and elimination of food.

adj. 2 Promoting the healthy breakdown, assimilation, and/or elimination of food.

Diuretic n. A substance that facilitates or increases urination. Diuretics can improve kidney function and treat swelling. Excessive use of diuretics can also tax the kidneys. Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), cucumbers, and coffee are all diuretics.

adj. Facilitating or increasing urination.

Emmenagogue n. An herb or preparation that facilitates or increases menstrual flow. Black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) is an emmenagogue. Emmenagogues are generally contraindicated in pregnancy.

adj. Facilitating or increasing menstrual flow.

Essential Oil n. An oil characterized by a strong aroma, strong taste, the presence of terpenes, and by vaporizing in low temperatures. Essential oils are components of many plants, and when isolated, make fairly strong medicine used primarily externally or for inhalation, and usually not safe for internal use.

n. 1 A preparation made by chemically removing the soluble parts of a substance into a solvent or menstruum. Herbalists often make extracts using water, alcohol, glycerin, vinegar, oil, or combinations of these. Infusions, medicinal vinegars, tinctures, decoctions, and medicinal oils are all extracts.

n. 2 A tincture.

Extract v. To remove the soluble parts of a substance into a solvent or menstruum by chemical means.

Febrifuge n. An herb or preparation that lowers fevers. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), and boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) are all febrifuges.

<i>Galactagogue</i>	n.	A substance that increases the production or flow of milk; a remedy that aids lactation. Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) and hops (<i>Humulus lupulus</i>) are galactagogues.
<i>Glandular</i>	n.	A substance that treats the adrenal, thyroid, or other glands. Nettle seeds (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) are a glandular for the adrenals.
	adj.	Relating to or treating the adrenal, thyroid, or other glands.
<i>Hepatic</i>	n.	A substance that treats the liver. Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>) is a hepatic.
<i>Hypnotic</i>	n.	An herb or preparation that induces sleep. Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i>) and valerian (<i>Valeriana officinale</i>) are both hypnotics.
	adj.	Inducing sleep.
<i>Infuse</i>	v.	To prepare by steeping in water, especially hot water, straining, and squeezing the marc.
<i>Infusion</i>	n.	A preparation made by first steeping one or more plants or plant parts in water, most often hot water, and then straining the plant material, usually while squeezing the marc. An infusion extracts the flavor, aroma, and water-soluble nutritional and medicinal constituents into the water.
<i>Long Infusion</i>	n.	An infusion that steeps for three or more hours. Long infusions often steep overnight.

Lymphatic	n.	A substance that stimulates the circulation of lymph or <i>tonifies</i> the vessels or organs involved in the circulation or storage of lymph.
Macerate	v.	To soak a plant or plant parts in a <i>menstruum</i> so as to extract the medicinal constituents chemically.
Marc	n.	The plant material left after straining a preparation made by steeping, simmering, or macerating.
Menstruum	n.	(Plural, menstrua or menstruums .) The solvent used to extract the medicinal and/or nutritional constituents from a plant. Water, alcohol, vinegar, and glycerin are among the more common menstrua.
Mucilage	n.	A thick, slippery, <i>demulcent</i> substance produced by a plant or microorganism.
Mucilaginous	n.	Having or producing mucilage; <i>demulcent</i> . Okra, marshmallow root (<i>Althaea officinalis</i>), sassafras (<i>Sassafras albidum</i> , <i>Sassafras officinale</i>), and slippery elm (<i>Ulmus rubra</i>) are all mucilaginous.
Nervine	n.	An herb or preparation that helps with problems traditionally associated with the nerves, such as mental health issues, insomnia, and pain.
	adj.	Helping with problems traditionally associated with the nerves, such as mental health issues, insomnia, and pain.
Pectoral	n.	A substance that treats the lungs or the respiratory system.

Poultice n. A mass of plant material or other substances, usually mashed, gnashed, moistened, or heated, and placed directly on the skin. Sometimes covered by a cloth or adhesive. A plantain (*Plantago spp.*) poultice can draw splinters out.

Rhizome n. A usually horizontal stem that grows underground, is marked by nodes from which roots grow down, and branches out to produce a network of new plants growing up from the nodes.

Salve [sæv] n. A soothing ointment prepared from beeswax combined with oil, usually medicinal oil, and used in topical applications.

Short Infusion n. An *infusion* that steeps for a relatively short period of time, usually 5-30 minutes.

Sedative n. A substance that calms and facilitates sleep. Valerian (*Valeriana officinale*) is a sedative.

Sedative adj. Calming and facilitating sleep.

Simple n. An herbal preparation, such as a tincture or decoction, made from one herb alone.

Simpler n. An herbalist who prepares and recommends primarily *simples* rather than compounds.

Spp.	abbr. n.pl.	Species. <i>Used to indicate more than one species in the same botanical family. Echinacea spp. includes both Echinacea purpurea and Echinacea angustifolium, among other species. Plantago spp. includes both Plantago major and Plantago lanceolata.</i>
Stimulant	n.	An herb or preparation that increases the activity level in an organ or body system. Echinacea (<i>Echinacea spp.</i>) is an immunostimulant; it stimulates the immune system. Cayenne (<i>Capsicum spp.</i>) is a circulatory stimulant. Rosemary is a stimulant to the nervous, digestive, and circulatory systems.
Sudorific	adj.	Increasing sweat or facilitating the release of sweat; cf. <i>diaphoretic</i> .
Syrup	n.	A sweet liquid preparation, often made by adding honey or sugar to a decoction.
Tea	n.	A drink made by steeping a plant or plant parts, especially <i>Camellia sinensis</i> .
Tisane	n.	An herbal beverage made by decoction or short infusion and not prepared from the tea plant (<i>Camellia sinensis</i>).
Tincture	n. v.	A preparation made by macerating one or more plants or plant parts in a <i>menstruum</i> , usually alcohol or glycerin, straining, and squeezing the <i>marc</i> in order to extract the chemical constituents into the <i>menstruum</i> . To prepare by <i>macerating</i> in a <i>menstruum</i> , straining, and squeezing the marc in order to extract the chemical constituents.

<i>Tonic</i>	n.	A substance that strengthens one or more organs or systems, or the entire organism. Stinging nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) is a general tonic, as well as a specific kidney, liver, and hair tonic. Red raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>) is a reproductive tonic; Mullein (<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>) is a respiratory tonic.
<i>Tonify</i>	v.	To strengthen. Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) tonifies the entire body.
<i>Volatile Oil</i>	n.	An oil characterized by volatility, or rapid vaporization at relatively low temperatures; cf. <i>essential oil</i> .
<i>Vulnerary</i>	n.	A substance that soothes and heals wounds. Comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>) is an excellent vulnerary.
	adj.	Being or concerning a substance that soothes and heals wounds.

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