

STINGING NETTLE

COMMON NAME: GREAT NETTLE
COMMON NAME: COMMON NETTLE

LATIN NAME: *Urtica dioica*
LATIN NAME: *Urtica urens*

FAMILY: *Urticaceae*

HISTORY: As Culpeper wrote in 1653. "Stinging nettles need no description; they may be found by feeling, in the darkest night" (*The English Physician Enlarged*) *Urtica* is the original latin name used by Horace and Pliny for the plant. The latin name "*urer*" means to burn and refers to the stinging hairs, which in some species contain substances toxic enough to cause death. It was used in cloth manufacture from the bronze age to the early 20th century due to the fibrous nature of the plant.

BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION: *Urtica dioica* is a coarse perennial with creeping yellow roots and ovate, deeply toothed leaves covered with bristly, stinging hairs. In summer minute green flowers are borne in pendulous clusters up to 10cm long. *Urtica urens* is an annual with similar features and properties.

TYPE: PERENNIAL **HEIGHT:** 1.5 M **SPREAD:** INDEFINITE **HARDINESS ZONES:** 3-10

HABITAT: *Urtica dioica* is indigenous to North America and *Urtica urens* in Europe. Grows in waste places everywhere, especially in soils rich in nitrogen. prefers moist soil in sun or partial shade. Nettles can be invasive but are easily controlled by pulling out dormant rhizomes. They provide food for the caterpillars of various butterflies such as red admirals.

PROPAGATION: By seed sown in spring or by division in spring. Cut back hard after first harvest for a second crop of leaves.

PARTS USED: new shoots (<10cm), small leaves, aerial parts

HARVEST: FOR FOOD- new shoots and small leaves can be used fresh or cooked

FOR MEDICINAL- whole plant above the ground cut as flowering begins in the summer and dried for use in infusions, liquid extracts,,ointments,,powders and tinctures.

CONSTITUENTS: flavonoids

indole amines-histamine,choline,serotonin(5ht)-particularly in stinging hairs.

green plant substances in high quantity-chlorophylls, carotenoids, xanthophylls, vit. c, a etc.

minerals- high content of calcium,potassium salts, iron

tannic, gallic and formic acids

PROPERTIES: Nutritive, astringent, tonic, diuretic, haemostatic. Also a commercial source of chlorophyll.

INDICATIONS: specific for eczema, especially nervous eczema, childhood eczema
poison ivy, insect stings, pruritus, burning, itching, as an infusion applied topically as a
fomentation.
internal hemorrhages, hemorrhoids, uterine hemorrhages (infusion)
rheumatism, arthritis and gout
diseases of the colon, gastritis, diarrhea
gravel and nephritic complaints
cystitis, leucorrhea
Asthma, bronchitis
nutritive for anemia, blood building, iron deficiency, appetite stimulant,
antidiabetic (lowers blood sugar levels)
for damaged and thinning hair—orally as an infusion or a cold infusion or steeped in cider vinegar
for 2 weeks and applied as a rinse. May be diluted with rose water/distilled water.

DOSAGE: INFUSION- 1-3 tsp. dried herb per cup hot water, three times per day
TINCTURE- 1-4 ml t.i.d.
POULTICES AND FOMENTATIONS—fresh herb
FRESH HERB AS A COUNTER-IRRITANT

COMBINATIONS: for sunburn, skin irritation, poison ivy etc. combine with jewelweed (*Impatiens carpendsi*),
yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) or other astringent, tannin rich plants.

CONTRAINDICATIONS/WARNINGS: None known.

*** *Do not use as counter-irritant on children or fearful adults without consent.****