



Nourishing Nettle Tips

Nettles are one of the first foraging opportunities in the new year and are often available for harvesting around Imbolc time (1st February). Here we share the properties of the nettle, some ways to harvest the tender greens and enjoy as tea or added to soup.

Some Uses of Nettles

Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are an incredible plant and are found commonly throughout the UK. They have had many uses for humans over time. Here are a few examples: medicinally, as wild food, their fibres used in textiles and their stalks used for fire lighting...

- There are about 100 invertebrate species associated with the nettle, about 30 of which are restricted to nettles for their habitat at least for one phase of their life cycle.
- Nettles have an antihistamine effect, valuable for treating hayfever and other allergies.
- The iron in nettles is very easily absorbed and assimilated making it a wonderful treatment for anaemia.

Ages

All ages

Duration

10 minutes minimum

Properties

Nettles have the medicine of fire:

- Awakening: Energises internal organs
- Detoxes
- Remineralises your body
- Used externally on burns and itchy hot rashes (with stings crushed and squishing the juices out)

How To Harvest Nettles

- One of the best ways we've found with children is for them to have a pair of scissors and a cup and simply snip the tips into the cup.
- As adults you can simply pluck the tips off. You're likely to get some stings this way, some people seem not to mind and others trust they help prevent arthritis!

Disclaimer: The advice in this guide is considered to be correct at the time of writing, but Red Squirrel Resources accept no liability for actions inspired by these resources.

Equipment Needed

- Scissors
- Cups
- Thermos flask of hot water

Variations

- Add nettle tips to a soup
- Make pesto from the tender greens of nettles
- Use instead of spinach in dishes such as the Indian dish *saag paneer*

Teacher Tricks and Tips

- Bring a flask of hot water to make it really quick and simple to make your nettle tea out in the woods. This is especially helpful in the colder months to help keep warm.

Invisible Learning

- Deepening relationship to plants and their gifts
- Deepening relationship to place

Hazards to Highlight

- Be aware of the stings for children - whilst they'll do no lasting damage, they can cause discomfort for the day. Remember the juice from nettle leaves soothes the stings.
- Be sure that it is nettle you're foraging.

Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Plant Based Activities
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

Links

- Safe Foraging Practice
- Respectful Harvest
- Spring Green Pesto

Tags

- Foraging, wild food, medicine, nettles, fibres, spring greens