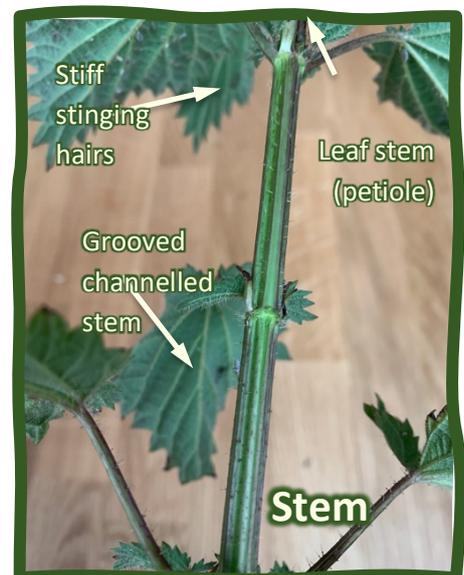
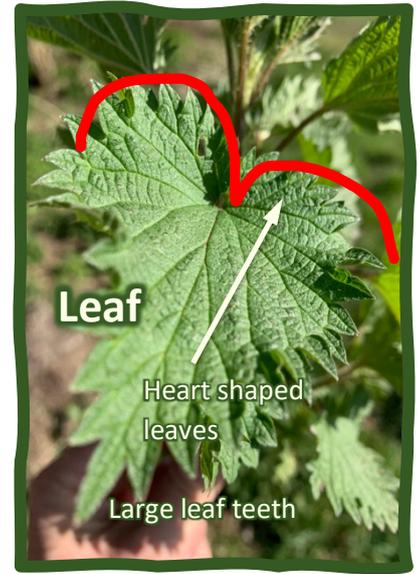


PLANT ID: nettle

Urtica dioica



PLANT ID: nettle *Urtica dioica*

Magic

For millennia nettle has been used to restore blood circulation under the skin, ward off arthritis in the joints and keep you warm through its irritation of the skin. Its uncomfortable for the first 30 minutes but for hours afterwards there is a tingling feeling. It is used in the treatment of gout even today. However, some people may have an allergic reaction to nettle stings.

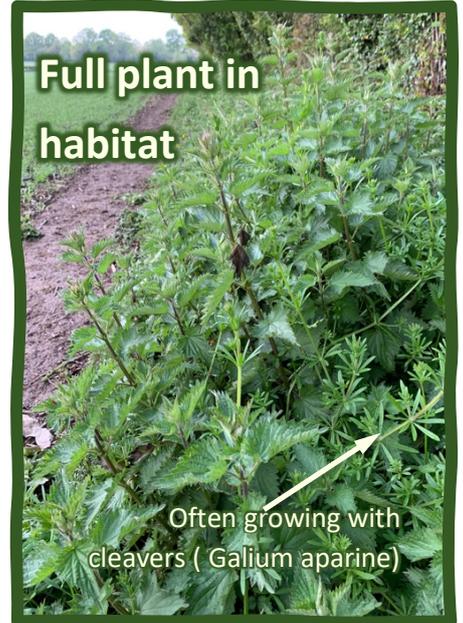
Showoff status

Alarm your friends by picking and eating a raw leaf!. To do it, you must be brave and confident in gently brushing down the hairs with your thumb and then rolling the leaf tightly into a tube and then folding it. Then take it and place it in a well salivated mouth and chew with a smile!

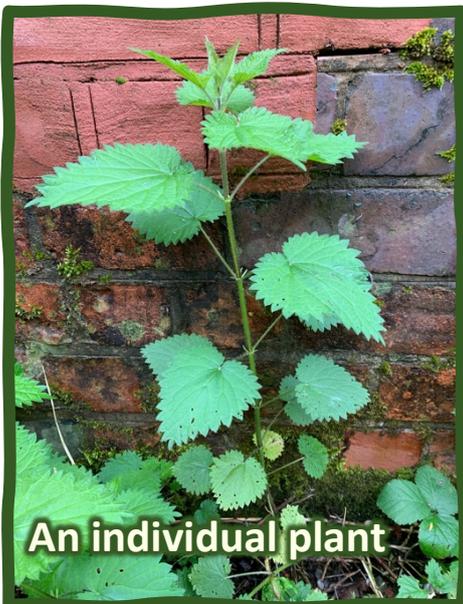
Leaves become toxic during and after flowering.



Full plant in habitat



Often growing with cleavers (*Galium aparine*)



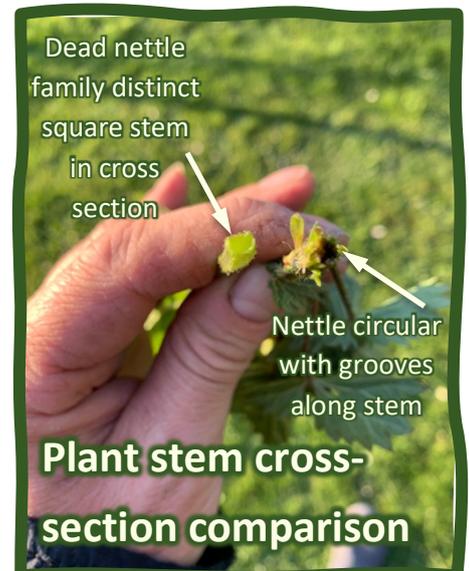
An individual plant



Dead nettle family

Nettle

Plant stem comparison



Dead nettle family distinct square stem in cross section

Nettle circular with grooves along stem

Plant stem cross-section comparison



Flower

Pendulous mature flowers

Helpful ID tips:

Spring/Summer/Autumn: The leaves are very distinctive in that if touched they'll sting you – it will make it the plant you will always remember with 'fondness'!

In late spring and through summer the pale green flowers droop down from the leaf to stem junction – looking like a length of green knotted string.

Autumn/Winter: Generally the plant dies back, but new shoots and leaves emerge at ground level only.

Special Feature

Once the leaves have been cooked or crushed the sting will be disarmed enabling you to eat it. Despite their aggressive looking appearance and intent to harm you through their sting, new emerging leaves are in fact delicious and loaded with proteins, vitamin C, beta-carotene, calcium and other minerals.

PLANT ID: nettle

Urtica dioica

Fact File:

CURRENT STATUS: Least Concern of becoming extinct
LOCATION: Exists across Europe

Plant Description (aka Taxonomy)

Member of the Nettle family (*Urticaceae*).



Flowers April Through September

Flower Structure: Small pale green pendulous flowers that droop down from the leaf main stem junction.



Fruits: Not noteworthy



Leaf:

Can be very variable. In general they are deep green to mid green depending on surrounding shade. The simple leaves have large teeth along edge and cordate bottoms where they join the leaf stem. Leaves in opposite and decussate pairs along stem. Abundant longer stiff stinging hairs and smaller non-stinging hairs on all leaf surfaces.
Stem (trunk, branch if relevant). Stiffly hairy throughout. Look out for the thick multi-channelled rounded stem that is very fibrous.



Habitat:

Found in big clumps where-ever you find very fertile soils with lots of phosphate enrichment caused by human activity (e.g. bonfire sites, refuse dumps etc..) A perennial that can grow up to 2m tall with distinct underground golden yellow rhizomes help it to spread.

ALIASES

Also known as the Stinging nettle, Devil's plaything, Hokey-pokey and Jinny nettle.

What to look for



Best time to see it and use it

Depends on what you want to do with it?
CAUTION: If you want to eat it then Springtime and again in the Autumn is best for collecting the fresh young leaves from the top 8cm before the flowers appear otherwise the leaves are toxic.

It's stinging hairs are like glass hyper-dermic needles that inject chemicals into the skin leaving an itchy rash. Lots of different habitats but typically found in woodlands, hedgerow bottoms, scrubby waste ground, disturbed ground, garden compost heaps, grassland pastures and orchards that have regular visits from farm animals.

FOOD WEB

The caterpillars of the small tortoiseshell butterfly and peacock butterfly feed on the leaves. Aphids that live there are eaten by ladybirds and birds eat fruits.

IMPERSONATORS: Key similar species are:

Similar plants that will grow close-by and may be confused with it include some members of the Dead-nettle family (*Lamiaceae*), such as White Dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), Red Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*), Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Hedgewound Wort (*Stachys sylvatica*).



Botany glossary part 1

Aphids small bugs that feeds by sucking plant sap.

Cordate heart-shaped, possessing two distinct lobes together at the base

Fibrous characterised by fibres

Opposite, Decussate leaves arranged along the stem in pairs, each pair at right angles to the pair next above or below

Petiole a stalk of a leaf

Pendulous features of plants such as leaves, fruits, flowers that droop

Uses: thread for textile and rope, tea, soil cleansing, hair products, dyes, manure, fly repellent, vegetable rennet, arthritis relief and food.

Botany glossary part 2

Phosphate a chemical and phosphorus buildup is caused by excessive use of inorganic fertilizer or the use of composts and manures high in phosphorus.

Rhizome a root like stem that grows beneath the ground from which new plant shoots will emerge.

Perennial a plant that lives for more than two years and typically flowers and fruits each year thereafter.

Shoot refers to recent plant growth that may be either a stem, a flower or a leaf. Often also refers to a new plant that emerges from the ground.

Get up close to the nettle by taking a virtual tour using the Pappus film library.



Full plant in habitat

Cultural links: folklore, myths, legends...

At least six British villages owe their names to the nettle, including Nettlecombe (Somerset) and Nettlesteads (Kent). The phosphates that nettle thrives upon endure for a long time and so ancient nettle clumps will indicate abandoned villages even as far back as the Roman occupation of Britain.

Grasp the Nettle: if you dare, grab the stem and leaves quickly and hold them tightly – it will disarm the stings by crushing them.

Global species risk of extinction
(IUCN – Red Data List)

