The Amazing Benefits of Stinging Nettles, with Recipes

If I told you there was a plant that offered an amazing range of nutrients, eased allergy suffering, reduced inflammation, treated arthritis, healed rashes, cured anemia, and improved energy, you would want to know about it, right? Stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are a superfood, super-medicine, and all around superstar of the plant world.

Nettles have a long history, appearing in the writings of the ancient Greeks, ancient Egyptians, and Roman armies. Their fibers were found in artifacts from the Bronze age and early indigenous American cultures. Nettles are found growing all over the world and in forests and fields near you. They are readily available as a bulk herb and supplement at health food stores. You can incorporate nettles in your diet by creating amazing culinary delights or by steeping them as a tea when you just feel like you need some super powers. There is a lot that you should know about nettles.

Nettles – the Super-Green Superfood!

Nettles pack a powerful punch of nutritional value, making them an excellent superfood and tonic. They contain high levels of iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin K, potassium, magnesium, and more chlorophyll than almost any other plant. They have been used throughout history to restore energy to the sick and stimulate sluggish metabolic and lymphatic systems in the spring.

When consumed as a broth, tea, or even a traditional beer,

nettles are an age-old cure for scurvy, anemia, low energy, and general depletion from illness or fever. Nettle tea can be extremely useful as a mother’s helper to bolster prenatal nutrition and to increase milk production for breastfeeding. The high nutrient content, combined with all the other positive benefits, makes nettles a worthy daily health supplement. Whether this is in the form of a capsule, tincture, or fresh herb, it’s a good way to ensure you are taking care of yourself.

Nettles as All Around Medicine

Stinging nettle is one of those plants I like to call “Nature’s medicine chest.” It addresses such a wide variety of ailments both internally and topically, that it is always worth having on hand. Aside from the more prevalent treatments for arthritis and allergies, nettles act as an anti-inflammatory agent, addressing a variety of related conditions from sore muscles to gastrointestinal discomfort. The diuretic properties of nettles make them a useful treatment for urinary tract infections, issues with the bladder and kidneys, and enlarged prostate (BPH) for men. A reliable women’s health herb throughout the entire reproductive

Nettles alleviate a variety of issues encountered during menstruation, pregnancy, the postpartum period, and menopause making them a reliable women’s health herb for the entire reproductive cycle.

It is also thought that nettles aid in reducing blood pressure and lowering blood sugar. Externally, nettles treat eczema, burns, rashes, hives, and stimulate hair growth. As an astringent, it stops bleeding and can be applied in a powdered form to arrest nosebleeds. When it comes down to it, nettles belong in your medicine cabinet in some form, much like band-aids. Really.

Nettles as Arthritis Treatment

Although the sting of the stinging nettle is uncomfortable when you encounter it out on a walk, the prickly hairs on the stem and leaves actually reduce the pain and swelling of arthritis. If you pick nettles with your bare hands, your fingertips may be numb for hours afterward. Urtification, or basically flogging the affected area with stinging nettles, is a practice documented over the last two thousand years. Research has shown that the “sting” of nettles both interferes with pain signals in the body and releases anti-inflammatory compounds to treat arthritic conditions. Taken internally, nettles have been found to support bone and joint health, deliver a healthy dose of boron, balance hormones that affect arthritic conditions, and flush uric acid buildup from the affected joint areas. With plenty of not-so-great-for-you pain relief available these days, it’s nice to have this natural, safe, herbal go-to available for daily management.

Nettles as Allergy Treatment

For a large number of the population suffering from allergies and hay fever, nettles can be a great ally. It is most commonly taken in the form of freeze-dried capsules during periods of seasonal allergies, to reduce inflammation of the affected tissues. Nettles are thought to reduce the histamine levels produced by the body as an allergy response, thus alleviating the allergy symptoms. Many people have reported that itchy eyes, sneezing, runny noses, and stuffy sinuses are treated as effectively, if not more so, by stinging nettle than over the counter allergy medications. They will also leave you feeling energized rather than drowsy. I have always thought it was a wonderful coincidence that nettles start growing in the spring just as pollens are coming out, and continue into the summer and height of pollen season.

Benefits and Use of Stinging Nettles for Other Ailments

Stinging nettles are a blood purifying, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, detoxifying antioxidant with more health benefits than we can list.

- May treat many skin problems from acne to eczema
- Stimulates lymph system
- Stimulates immune system
- Support adrenal glands
- Supports thyroid
- Supports prostate
- Supports the spleen
- Supports the pancreas
- Supports entire endocrine system (hormonal system, glands)
- Good for menstrual cramps, bloating, PMS
- Relieves menopausal symptoms
- Relieves arthritis symptoms
- Promotes release of uric acid from joints
- Supports the kidneys
- May break down kidney stones
- Helps with respiratory tract infections and respiratory inflammation
- Helps asthma sufferers
- Strengthens the fetus in pregnant women
- Promotes milk production for breastfeeding
- Improves blood clotting
- Relieves pain and symptoms from osteoarthritis
- Reduces inflammation
- Reduces likelihood of prostate cancer
- Eliminates allergic rhinitis
- Reduces hypertension
- May reduce nausea
- Alleviates diarrhea

- Helps with gastrointestinal disease, IBS, and constipation
- Reduces gingivitis (when used in mouth)
- Removes and helps prevents plaque buildup (when used in mouth)
- Has been shown to help treat Alzheimer’s disease
- Provides relief for neurological disorders like MS, ALS, and sciatica
- Destroys intestinal worms and other parasites
- It’s antifungal. Kills Candida along with other yeast and fungi

How to Find Nettles

Nettles can be found growing in moist soils at the edge of forests, in fields, along ditches and near streams or marshy areas. With a good plant ID guide and advice from local foragers, you can venture out and gather your own nettles all through the spring months. You can also purchase nettle seeds from heirloom seed companies and plant them in your garden. I have found that the rhizomes from wild nettle patches transplant nicely into my garden. They love my compost pile. With a little water, you can keep them going through the summer. Nettles are very easy to dry and use throughout the rest of the year when they aren’t found growing outside. If you do not have access to foraging areas or garden space, you can always purchase dried nettle leaf and a variety of nettle supplements. In the Spring, grocery stores will sometimes carry fresh, wildcrafted nettles.

Wellness Nettle Broth Recipe

I have found when I am feeling under the weather, or I am just in need of some solidly green food at the end of the winter, a nettle broth is perfect. It leaves me feeling healthy and energized.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of fresh stinging nettle tips (or 1 cup dried)
- 1 medium onion finely chopped
- 4-5 cloves fresh minced garlic
- 2 Tbs fresh grated ginger root
- 1 burdock root peeled and chopped fine (or 4 Tbs dried)
- 4 cups vegetable broth, miso broth, or bone broth
- 1 Tbs olive oil
- dash of tamari or Bragg’s Liquid Aminos
- salt and pepper to taste

In a large pot, sauté onions until translucent. Add burdock root, garlic, and ginger and sauté a few more minutes. Add broth and bring to a boil. Add nettles, turn down to a simmer, and stir occasionally until the nettles are soft and fully cooked. (This breaks down the prickly hairs, and your tongue will thank you.) Add tamari or Bragg’s and season to taste.

Stinging Nettle Homemade Toothpaste Recipe

The boron in stinging nettles is an essential element for bone health that helps bones and teeth retain calcium. Therefore, it is a great addition to homemade toothpaste.

Homemade toothpaste is easy. If you don’t have one of the ingredients, leave it out or substitute something similar. Mix it up, and experiment.

- 2 Tbsp nettle powder
- 1 tsp Irish moss powder
- 1 tsp bladderwrack powder
- 1 drops liquid stevia
- 5 drops peppermint essential oil
- 1 tsp unrefined sea salt
- 1 tsp baking soda

Add dry ingredients together and mix. Add wet ingredients and a little bit of distilled water to get your desired consistency.

Recommended Reading:

- *Five Common Weeds to Cultivate for Health and Nutrition*
- *Fight Cavities and Gingivitis Naturally With Homemade DIY Oral Health*
- *Allergy Free in Five Days (foods, dander, dust, seasonal, etc.)*
- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation, and How To Stop It For Good*
- *Things You Should Know About Garlic – DIY, Recipes, Other Tips*

Related Products:

- Gaia Herbs Nettle Leaf Capsules
- Gaia Herbs Nettle Leaf Liquid Extract
- Douglas Labs Nettle Capsules

Sources:

- *Stinging Nettle* – University of Maryland Medical Center
- *Stinging Nettle* – Dr. Christopher's Herbal Legacy
- *Use Natural Remedies for Arthritis Pain* – Mother Earth News
- *Nettle: Nutritious Allergy Ally* – The Practical Herbalist
- *Eat Your Wild Greens: The Delectable Nettle* – A Mountain Hearth
- *Nettles Bring Spring to the Kitchen* – NPR