

Learning in the Leaves

Foraging- Nettles



Distinguishing Features

- Stinging nettle will grow in dense clusters
- Stalks can reach 5-8 feet at maturity
- Leaves are about 2-5 inches long with jagged edges, found in opposing pairs along the upper half of the stalk.
- Leaves are pointed at the tips, with a heart-shaped base and indented veins.
- The plant will have small “hairs” up the stalk and stems. (This is where the sting comes from!)
- Young plants will have smaller, heart-shaped leaves with a purple-ish hue, while the mature plants have longer, pointed leaves that appear very green.

Interesting Facts

Common nettle is best known for its needle-like hairs that cover leaves and stem. Each hair ends with swollen base that contains mix of chemicals. These chemicals are responsible for the burning sensation that results from touching of common nettle.

Large herbivores avoid common nettle because of its sharp and poisonous hairs. On the other hand, many insects and their larvae use common nettle as food and safe place for egg deposition.

Common nettle is used in folk medicine as a remedy for rheumatism and gout. Placing of fresh plant on the painful joint can alleviate pain.

Common nettle is used in cosmetic industry mostly in the production of shampoos. Shampoos made of common nettle are used to remove dandruff and to improve quality of hair.

Common nettle was used in the production of fabrics in the past (before cotton was discovered). Certain countries produce textile made of common nettle today, because it is cheap and has good characteristics