

How to Grow Nettle

In medieval Europe Stinging nettle was used as a diuretic (to rid the body of excess water) and to treat joint pain. Stinging nettle has been used for hundreds of years to treat painful muscles and joints, eczema, arthritis, gout, and anemia. Today, many people use it to treat urinary problems during the early stages of an enlarged prostate, for urinary tract infections, for hay fever, or in compresses or creams for treating joint pain, sprains and strains, tendonitis, and insect bites.

GROWING NOTES

Nettle is an herbaceous, quick-growing plant whose leaves and stems are covered with tiny, hollow, silica-tipped hairs which can cause irritation. Can grow to a height of approximately 4'.

Nettles prefers rich soil with good moisture content and especially favors the edges of streams or nutrient-dense pastures.

Nettle seeds are tiny, light dependant germinators that can be started indoors or out. However, select your location carefully as nettles are very hardy and can spread quickly with the right conditions. Nettles can be assisted with stratification, but it is not necessary.

To start, tamp the small seeds lightly into the soil or cover with a thin layer of soil (1/4"). If starting indoors, sow in flats in late winter and transplant in early spring. Space plants approximately 8" apart. If direct sowing, seed in spring and thin as desired and plant rows 1" apart.

MAINTAINING

It recommended to find a permanent spot with rich, moist conditions a little away from (or on the periphery of) your other herbs.

HARVESTING

Carefully collect spiny leaves before plant flowers in spring and early summer. Do not harvest when flowering. Be sure to wear gloves when collecting to avoid the 'sting' delivered by tiny hairs on the leaves and stem. Place on well-ventilated screen to dry.

NOTE - Do not use while pregnant or breastfeeding without consulting your doctor. Stinging nettle should never be applied to an open wound. Be careful when handling the nettle plant because touching it can cause an allergic rash. Occasional side effects include mild stomach upset, fluid retention, and hives or rash (mainly from topical use).