

Nettle Tea for You and Your Garden



Nettles are tremendous mineral accumulators, so they're good for both you and your garden. The leaves and stalks are high in 20 minerals. Nettles grow wild in disturbed areas at the edge of the woods, especially near a stream or other water source because they like damp areas.

You can also grow them from seed. Try to corral your nettles so they can't escape; otherwise, they will take over. Place them in an out-of-the-way spot, not within the garden. You can cut young nettles back almost to the ground in the spring, and again one or two times.

Wear gloves when you harvest nettles because the leaves have sharp, hair-like structures that can cause an irritating rash. Harvest before the plant flowers for the most potency.

Feeding Your Plants

The average nutrient content for nettle leaves is N2-P0-K5 with high trace elements. Because nettles are high in nitrogen, they can give plants a boost that's needed in early summer, when they are trying to dramatically increase their vegetation. A spray of nettle tea can also control aphids and powdery mildew.

Follow these steps to make nettle tea for your plants:

1. Gather a bucketful of leaves and stems. Remember to wear gloves!
2. Add unchlorinated water so the bucket is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way full. Weigh the plants down with a rock so they're covered.
3. Let the bucket sit for 2 to 3 weeks in the shade, with a loose lid to let air in and keep critters out. The mixture is going to smell foul, so place it out of the way.
4. Pour off the liquid into jugs for storage. The plant material can go into the compost.
5. Use by diluting—1 part nettle tea to 10 parts water—and then pouring around your plants. You can use nettle tea every few weeks as a foliar spray or as a soil drench.

Feeding You

Cook your nettle leaves before eating; this is a must for “de-stinging” them. Make an infusion for tea or use it like spinach in cooked dishes.

Nettles are full of nutrients that strengthen the human immune system, renew and tone body tissue, and nourish and purify the blood. Other medicinal benefits of nettles include the following:

- Kidney and adrenal restorative
- Diuretic
- Blood purifier
- Astringent
- Anti-inflammatory
- Hormone balancer
- Natural antihistamine
- Wound healer via cell repair