

Be Nice to Nettles – Factsheet

Did you know.....?

Many people dislike nettles because of their painful sting, but did you know that in Britain nettles are one of the most important native plants for wildlife!



1. Due to the sting, insects often use nettles as a good habitat to hide and live in as predators such as birds will not venture in to catch them. Many insects also eat the leaves of nettles and as such nettles can support over 40 species of insect in the UK, including many of our most beautiful butterflies.
2. The scientific name for the common nettle or stinging nettle is *Urtica dioica*. Dioica means 'two houses' and refers to the fact that the male and female flowers are separate. This is called Monoecious.
3. We also have Red Dead and White Dead Nettles in the UK which look very similar but do not sting and as such the Common Nettle is not in the same family.
4. It may be that the word 'nettle' is derived from *Noedl* meaning a needle - referring to the stinging mechanism in the nettle leaves!
5. The nettles stings as a defence mechanism, to reduce the risk of animals eating it. The sting contains formic acid, similar to that found in ants but it also contains the chemicals histamine, acetylcholine and 5-hydroxytryptamine (serotonin) but also another yet undiscovered ingredient!

Nettle Wordsearch

Hidden in the grid below are words all associated with Nettles.
The words may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal or even backwards...
can you find them all?

NETTLE
CATERPILLAR
BUTTERFLIES

INSECTS
FLOWER
MOTH

INVERTEBRATE
PATCH
GREEN

SOUP
TEA

A	Q	C	J	U	K	I	Z	E	P	U	O	S
H	P	A	P	I	U	N	A	S	L	G	M	E
O	F	T	D	M	T	S	F	R	P	F	J	I
T	L	T	S	R	H	E	W	E	I	L	J	L
G	R	E	E	N	P	C	L	K	S	O	S	F
O	T	R	E	H	K	T	E	A	O	W	M	R
L	D	P	T	I	T	G	R	A	P	E	K	E
E	J	I	G	E	F	O	S	N	L	R	W	T
O	F	L	N	A	M	A	M	H	U	T	F	T
S	D	L	U	N	G	E	V	I	S	E	A	U
E	T	A	R	B	A	T	R	E	V	N	I	B
A	L	R	N	G	H	K	A	P	A	T	C	H