Nettle seed is a superb kidney trophorestorative. I use it for treating degenerative kidney disease, including glomerulonephritis, Buerger’s disease (IgA nephropathy) and chronic nephritis with degeneration. I often combine it with Processed Rehmannia, Dan Shen/Salvia miltiorrhiza, Cordyceps, Astragalus and Rhubarb root. Nettle seed with other nephroprotective herbs has been highly successful in improving kidney function in humans as well as dogs and cats. It has not been effective for polycystic kidney disease, and there is not enough data to determine its use for diabetic nephropathy. There are two reports of it helping patients get off dialysis. Lectins in the seed seem to be the active compounds and they have a specificity for renal tissue. In the only published case study on the use of the seed (Treasure, 2003), Nettle seed enhanced glomerular function and reduced serum creatinine levels in a patient with a kidney transplant and another who had a kidney removed. Use Urtica seed with Milk Thistle and Astragalus to protect the kidneys against nephrotoxic drugs.

Nettle leaf is nutrient rich and a blood/xue and capillary tonic. It is effective for anemia, low hemoglobin/hematocrit in pregnant women, capillary fragility, varicose veins, and skin that feels like paper and bruises easily. I also use it to prevent and treat osteoporosis (with Alfalfa, Horsetail, Oat Straw and Dandelion leaf), to heal bone fractures and to strengthen the nails, hair and teeth.

The leaf is a kidney tonic and non-irritating potassium-sparing diuretic (aquaretic) useful for treating hematuria, chronic low grade kidney pain and cystitis. In laboratory studies Nettle leaf inhibited E. coli growth motility and biofilm production (Wojnicz, et al, 2012), which may help explain some of its activity for treating UTIs. It also acts as an antiinflammatory, enhancing elimination of uric acid and other metabolic wastes. It is traditionally used to treat osteoarthritis, gout and gouty arthritis.

Urtica leaf is also a lung tonic, mild astringent and styptic, useful for controlling mild cases of hemoptysis.
In two human trials, hydro-alcoholic Nettle leaf extracts were found to relieve diabetes-induced inflammatory markers including IL-6 and CRP, while enhancing total antioxidant capacity and SOD levels (Namazi, et al, 2012 & 2011). Nettle leaf capsules (500 mg. capsule every 8 hours, for 3 months) reduced fasting and post-prandial serum glucose levels and HbA1c (Kianbakht, et al, 2013).

The root is used to treat benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). It can reduce lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) when used by itself, which may explain some of its activity for treating UTIs (Ghorbanibirgani, et al, 2013; Chrubasik, et al, 2007; Safarinejad, 2005) but it works best when combined with Saw Palmetto, White Sage and Collinsonia. According to preliminary reseach, it is possible that Nettle root may inhibit or slow the progression of prostate cancer.

### Secondary Uses

Using fresh Nettles to cause Nettle rash (urticaria) has been used as a heroic treatment for arthritis, stiff joints and muscle pain. In an exploratory study, this treatment was found to be effective for relieving joint pain (Randall, et al, 1999).

Freeze-dried Nettle leaf is a mild and short-acting antihistamine for allergic rhinitis. In a clinical trial it was only slightly more effective than placebo (Mittman, 1990). Nettle leaf has also been used to treat diarrhea, bleeding ulcers and blood in the stool.


The seed oil was found in animal research to reduce gut inflammation caused by colitis (Genc, et al, 2011).

### Dosage

#### Preparations

**Tea (Infusion):** 1-2 tsp. dried leaf, 8 oz. hot water, steep for 1 hour, take 3-4 cups/day
**Tincture (1:5):** 30-35% ETOH, 10% Vegetable Glycerin  
*Dose:* 3-5 mL (60-100 gtt.) TID/QID
**Triune:** 1/6 part
**Capsules:** 2(00) capsules BID/TID

**Root tincture:** 1:5, 30% ETOH, 2-3 mL (40-60 gtt.) QID
**Root tea:** 1 tsp. dried root, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep 1/2 hour, take 4 oz. TID
**Seed tincture:** 1:5, 45% ETOH, 1.5-2 mL (30-40 gtt.) QID
**Decoction of Nettle leaf with rose water** is a soothing topical application in eczema, poison ivy and insect stings (Kutsch-Cheraux, 1953).

### Contraindications & Drug Interactions

Do not eat the raw leaves as they can sting the throat, causing impaired breathing. Contact with fresh Nettles can cause urticaria, a painful, red, blistered rash. Use cautiously if taking digoxin, Lanoxin or lithium.

There are several case reports from a well-known herbalist stating that a small number of post-menopausal women who, upon taking Nettle leaf, started to experience menstruation-like bleeding again. I do not know what to make of these reports.

### Special Notes

*Urtica urens* (Dwarf Nettle). Wood Nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) is sometimes used similarly to Stinging Nettle. The leaves can be pickled in vinegar as a food or cooked as a nutritious leafy vegetable.

For Nettle rash, use fresh Jewelweed juice, Plantain leaves, Burdock leaves, Chickweed, Yellow Dock leaves or Nettle leaf juice. Avoid gathering older Nettles leaves as they contain crystraliths (calcium carbonate) which can irritate the kidneys and GI tract.

### Additional Resources & References


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