

## Nettle Season is Here!!

By Janell Blacketer, Garden Field Technician

Spring has snuck up on us again! We are very lucky here at Nisqually, for we have our very own patch of nettles at the top of the garden by the Longhouse under the Cedar tree. Here are some helpful tips when harvesting stinging nettles:

- First and foremost always have an offering for the plants you choose to harvest in the wild! It shows respect and gratitude. Never take more than you need, so with nettles we only like to cut the tops off! Doing that will help it flourish for the rest of the year.
- There are many great places that have stinging nettles in the area. There is Priest Point Park, Fry Cove, Woodard Bay and for some of you, deep in your backyard. However, if you choose somewhere popular be sure there is no major roadside traffic and that it is not a chemical agriculture area. Nettles pick up poisons and metals from soil.
- OH, and By the WAY, they sting!!! Some great tools for harvesting are tough gloves and scissors. It has been said, though, that the stinging helps with arthritis and warriors and hunters sting themselves for vitality.
- It is best to gather the nettles before they flower or reach over a foot tall. As the leaves get older they contain cysoliths, which can irritate the kidneys. This compound is destroyed after the leaves are dry, so use any nettles gathered after flowering for dried herb tea.



Nettles come out in the spring to help our bodies restore from a long, cold winter. They are considered a “Super Food” because they are very high in minerals and vitamins and are a tonic for the liver, kidneys, blood and allergies. They are a great detox when trying to cleanse your body. We want you to know everything you can about nettles, because they are only around for spring and have sooo much power in them that it is best to harvest when they are here!

All the fun things you can make with nettles are very rewarding, and your body will show its appreciation. Cooking nettles can be tricky. To get the sting out you can either blanch them, cook them or dry them. After that the possibilities are endless!!! They work as well as cooking anything with spinach and chard. They can hide easily in many meals as well, if chopped up fine.

The Nisqually Garden thought it would be extremely beneficial for you guys to read this article because the more we know the more we grow! We always welcome Tribal community members to come harvest from our nettle patch at the Garden. If you'd like assistance, please contact us at **(360) 456-5221 Ext. 1165**, or [blacketer.janell@nisqually-nsn.gov](mailto:blacketer.janell@nisqually-nsn.gov).

Nettle is a plant that our ancestors enjoyed, and it can only help lift your spirit to know you are taking advantage of what Mother Earth has to offer us! Here are some yummy recipes to help your experience with this strong medicine! Have fun, be safe and always appreciate.