

Boundary Way



Image Credit: Maria Billington

Plants Uses with Herbalist Maria Billington

Nettles Fact File

When to Spot: Spring through to Autumn, often if conditions are favourable a second flush of fresh growth in autumn with darker leaves.

What to Spot: Bright green spiky spring tops are hard to mistake in early to mid-spring, so vibrant and full of life they almost glow. As the plant matures it grows in height and look darker green. In the Summer the plant produces tiny green flowers, which hang down. Have you ever noticed them? The flowers turn into tiny seeds and go brown.

Habitat: Nettles need soil rich in phosphates and nitrogen to thrive. This means they can be an indicator of good soil, helping you know where is best to plant. You will also find them around muck heaps, in fact they are found just about anywhere on the wild edges of gardens, growing out of paving stones in urban environments and growing along hedge lines. They grow worldwide and it is said you're never more than 10ft away from a nettle!

Where to spot at Boundary Way: On the wild edges and the spaces between more used areas, such as between the story telling area and the sensory garden.

Did you know? Nettles can be used in exactly the same way as spinach –almost any recipe containing spinach could use foraged nettles instead.



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Uses of Nettles

Uses by Man

Nettles are edible. The best part for eating is the fresh spring tops, as nettles tend to get woody as they mature. Nettles can be brewed into beer and made into nettle soup, omelettes and purée. You can use nettle's fibre for textiles and cordage which can be woven or spun. Alongside this nettles are great for the compost heap because they act as a natural activator and speed up the decomposition process. You can also mix nettles with water to make a nitrogen-rich feed that plants will love.

Medicinal Uses by Man

They make a delicious, refreshing herbal tea that tastes great and is full of vitamins and minerals. Nettles are also considered as a blood tonic due to being high in iron and chlorophyll – making them ideal for use during pregnancy. All parts of the plant are used in medicine: leaves, rhizomes, roots, tops and seeds. In fact it is such a useful plant that we should all grow a patch for our health!

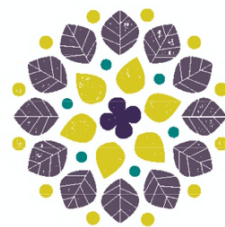
Nettles can be used in the following ways to help medicinally:

Tea: spring tonic, bleeding, anaemia, gout, fluid retention, high or low blood pressure, coughs, allergies, skin problems and high blood sugar. Used externally is a great hair tonic and good for cuts and wounds.

Nettle root: Used either as a decoction or as a tincture can be used for prostate enlargement, inflammation and infections.

Uses in Nature

Nettles are key to the survival of butterflies, as they are the primary food source for many caterpillars including those of the comma, tortoiseshell and peacock. Their fresh growth attracts aphids, which are a vital food source for insects and birds. They are also the number one destination for ladybirds with eggs to lay – and the larvae will destroy problem whitefly and red spider mite.



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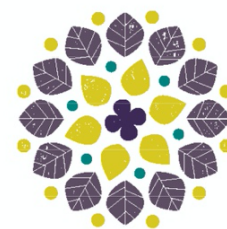
Cornsilk Fact File

Cornsilk is a soothing diuretic and is calming and soothing to the kidneys, helping improve their function. It is very helpful where elimination is required. For kidney pains and chronic cystitis you can make extra strong tea using 2 teaspoons of herb per cue and drink three times per day. Cornsilk can also be used to flush out gravel and stones from the kidneys. Sweetcorn itself is a good source of vitamin B6 .

It is a good remedy for vomiting and nausea. 1 cup of corn lightly dehydrated in a low oven, added to a pan with 900ml to make a decoction. Reduce to 200ml, then take 1 teaspoon as needed or 1 to 3 teaspoons in a cup of water and drunk freely.

With thanks to herbalist Maria Billington for researching and providing the information for these resources.

Disclaimer: These resource sheets are for educational purposes. Anyone with any illnesses, long term issues or on medication should contact a medical herbalist if wanting to use remedies for health issues.



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Bramble Fact File

When to spot: All year round but particularly in Spring with the lovely blossoms or in Autumn with the big juicy berries.

What to Spot: Brambles are sprawling bushes that ramble through hedges and woodlands with long thorny shoots. When a new shoot hits the ground it sends out new roots and starts growing all over again. Brambles have pretty pink or white flowers which turn into delicious black berries.

Habitat: Hedgerows, woodland and waste ground

Did you know: If you pick blackberries from different areas and look at them closely you will see that they can be quite different. Some are big and some are small, some are very sweet and some quite tasteless. There are around 400 different types of bramble in the UK.

Uses in Nature: A food source for honey bees and bumblebees. The leaves are eaten by certain caterpillars and some grazing mammals, especially deer. Caterpillars of concealer moth have been found feeding inside dead blackberry shoots. When mature, the berries are eaten and their seeds dispersed by several mammals, such as foxes, badgers and small birds.

Where to spot at Boundary Way: Easy to spot in the hedgerows around the edges of site.



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Uses of Brambles

Uses by Man

Blackberries have a high vitamin C content and can be eaten raw or cooked. They are traditionally used in pie, paired with apples in crumbles, to make wines, jams, jellies and vinegar. In the 18th and 19th centuries strong ale brewed from blackberries, malt and hops was popular. Blackberry fruits yield a blue dye and fibres from the stems have been used to make string. Bramble bushes can prevent soil erosion on infertile, disturbed sites. Ancient Britons used the thorny stems as a boundary/barrier to protect land, in the same way modern people use barbed wire.




Medicinal Uses by Man

A fantastic spring tonic can be made using the young blackberry shoots and leaves. Crushed blackberry leaves are wonderful for treating small wounds, perfect for when picking your berries! The leaf can also be used as a tea and has astringent qualities, with a tannin feel and so is useful in the treatment of mouth problems such as ulcers and gum disease. The main use for bramble leaf tea is in the treatment of diarrhoea, coughs, colds and fevers as well as sore throats.

Blackberry Oxymel Recipe – a soothing hot drink to help relieve colds

- Place gathered blackberries in a glass bowl
- Pour over white wine vinegar so they are just covered
- Place cloth or plate over bowl and leave for a day or two
- Crush fruit with a potato masher
- Strain through a jelly bag and measure
- Pour into a saucepan
- Add half the volume of honey
- Bring to boil and boil for five minutes
- Bottle and label.
- Mix one tablespoonful into a cup of hot water drink regularly to relive colds and coughs.

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