Nettle Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Nettle in brief:** Nettle tea is a traditional British herbal with real micronutrient content and modest evidence for hay-fever relief; brew strong with lemon and honey.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

Nettle tea (Urtica dioica) is brewed from the dried leaves of the common stinging nettle, producing a deep green, slightly grassy, slightly savoury cup. It is one of Britain's oldest hedgerow herbals, traditionally taken as a gentle daily tonic and valued for the mineral content of the leaf (iron, calcium, magnesium, silica), though the amounts delivered in a brewed cup are smaller than the old herbal rhetoric suggests. It is also one of the cheapest herbal teas on the British shelf.

This guide covers what nettle actually does, what it doesn't, the brewing approach, and the picks on our shelf.

What nettle tea actually does

Traditional use	What's behind it	Worth bearing in mind
Gentle daily tonic	Long folk tradition; the classic spring cup	A pleasant everyday herbal, not a medicine
Seasonal cup through pollen time	Traditionally taken in spring and summer	Modest at best; no substitute for proper hay-fever treatment
Mineral content	Iron, calcium, magnesium and silica in the leaf	Real but modest in the brewed cup; food delivers more
Hair and scalp rinse	A centuries-old cosmetic tradition	Folk use; results, if any, are gradual

A traditional seasonal cup

Nettle has a long tradition as a spring and summer cup, and plenty of people reach for it through pollen season. The evidence is modest and it is no substitute for proper treatment, but as a pleasant daily herbal it does no harm and many drinkers like the habit. If pollen really troubles you, the basics still do the heavy lifting: nasal saline rinses, sunglasses outdoors, and a shower after time outside, and a pharmacist can point you to an antihistamine if you need real relief.

The hair and scalp tradition

European herbalism has used nettle for hair and scalp care since at least the medieval period, both as a daily cup and as a cooled, strong brew used for a final rinse after washing. The iron and silica in the leaf are the usual explanation, but this is folk tradition rather than a proven hair treatment. Hair runs on a slow cycle of several months, so think of it as a gentle, traditional habit, not a quick fix.

The mineral question

Dried nettle leaves contain decent levels of iron, calcium, magnesium, and silica, leading to "natural multivitamin" claims in herbal tradition writing. The reality is more modest: the minerals are present but the bioavailability through a brewed tea is lower than through food. A cup of nettle tea delivers maybe 1 to 3mg of iron (compared to a small piece of red meat at ~2 to 3mg of more bioavailable haem iron).

Nettle tea is a useful supportive contribution to mineral intake, particularly for vegetarian drinkers; it's not a replacement for proper food based mineral nutrition.

How to brew nettle tea

- **Temperature:** 100°C, freshly drawn water.
- **Steep:** 5 to 7 minutes minimum, covered; the minerals and polyphenols are slow extractors. For maximum mineral content, steep 10 to 15 minutes.
- **Quantity:** 1 to 2g per cup (one tea bag or a heaped teaspoon of dried leaf).
- **Stinging nettle, properly dried, doesn't sting.** The drying process inactivates the formic acid that makes fresh nettles sting. Dried nettle is completely safe to handle.
- **Sweeten if needed:** the cup has a slightly grassy savoury character. A spoon of honey makes it more drinkable for first time drinkers.

What we stock

Nettle is rarely sold as a pure single herb tea bag in the UK; it's more common as a key ingredient in herbal blends. Browse the herbal teas collection and the wellness teas for the full nettle relevant range.

For nettle led wellness blends

- Pukka's 20 bag nettle blend with hibiscus + nettle + fennel; nettle is a key supporting herb
- Pukka everyday brew 20 Bags, fennel + cardamom + nettle; the gentle daily nettle cup
- Dragonfly everyday brew 20 Bags, dandelion + burdock + nettle; the herbalist's three root and leaf blend

For nettle in women's health blends

- Pukka Womankind 20 Bags, includes nettle in the cycle supportive blend
- Yogi Women's Energy 17 Bags, raspberry leaf + nettle + dong quai

For mineral tonic herbal blends

- Yogi Stomach Ease 17 Bags, includes nettle as a supporting herb

Caveats worth knowing

- **Diuretic effect:** nettle is a mild diuretic. People taking diuretic medication for blood pressure should mention nettle to their GP if drinking daily.
- **Pregnancy:** high dose nettle isn't recommended in pregnancy because safety data are limited, and the NHS advises no more than four cups of herbal tea a day; ask your midwife.
- **Iron absorption blocker / booster paradox:** nettle adds iron content but the tannins it contains slightly reduce non haem iron absorption from a meal. Drink between meals, not with iron rich food, to maximise the additive effect.
- **Kidney disease:** people with chronic kidney disease should be cautious with daily nettle because of its mineral content and diuretic effect; discuss with the renal dietitian.
- **Hair loss expectations:** at best nettle is a gentle traditional habit, not a treatment for hair loss. Significant or sudden hair loss is worth a proper word with your GP rather than a tea.

Related reading: the dandelion tea overview and the herbal and fruit infusions overview.

The British hedgerow tradition

Nettle tea sits in a quietly respectable corner of the British herbal cupboard and is worth being plain about because it is one of the few traditional UK herbals with a meaningful native history rather than an imported superfood halo. Stinging nettle (Urtica dioica) grows abundantly across the British Isles, was a long-standing wartime and rural food (nettle soup is a traditional spring dish, nettle pudding a Bronze Age archaeological find), and has been used for centuries by British herbalists for hay-fever symptoms, joint comfort, scalp tonics and (more historically) wound dressing. Its traditional credentials are therefore real rather than fashionable, and the modern revival of hedgerow foraging has put nettle tea back in front of a new generation of drinkers. The practical read is that nettle tea is one of the small set of herbals (alongside dandelion, elderflower and peppermint) where the British credentials are strong and the evidence is real if modest, and a sensible cupboard for someone interested in native herbal traditions should probably include it; people who skip it as "just weed tea" are missing a real ingredient.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Nettle costs pennies per cup, and nothing if foraged. Loose nettle leaf usually comes out ahead; bagged nettle sometimes matches it.

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