

Nettle Harvest Walk



Activity Purpose

Plants are our first teachers and caregivers. We have a responsibility to honor our relationships with all plants through respect and reciprocity. Harvesting with our plant relatives is one of the most honored ceremonies a person can experience. This activity will help us get to know our relatives, nettle, a little better.



Activity Overview

- ◇ Prepare your family to go on a walk. You can bring your plant cards and any other materials you might need. Ask family or friends about harvesting protocols they might know.
- ◇ Think of a spot where you might find nettle. Where does nettle like to grow? Do you remember seeing nettle somewhere? Go for a walk and look for your relative. Take time to observe other relatives nearby.
- ◇ Once you are home, prepare your plant relative and reflect on what you have learned from nettle. Consider what knowledge you will share with your descendants.

Roles, Relations, Responsibilities & Gifts

- ◇ Nettle thrives when harvested early and later in their seasonal cycle. Your respectful harvest helps nettle thrive, just as their nutrients help you thrive. What else can you do to support nettle?
- ◇ While you walk, pay attention to who else is around, above, and below. You can use your plant cards to help see relationships that are happening. Use all of your senses, including emotion, to see those relationships.
- ◇ Be sure to bring gifts, such as tobacco, coffee, cornmeal or water, to offer nettle before harvesting. Nettle offers us many gifts in the form of vitamins and minerals, strong cordage, and valuable teachings.

Learning Across Generations & with Other Families

- ◇ This activity can be done across generations with the whole family. Let your youngest children lead the way. If you have elders who cannot travel as far, engage them with stories and making when you return. Take pictures to share with friends and family.

Making Connections with Stories

- ◇ Start with story. Ask your family if they have stories about harvesting or about nettle. You might listen to the story of [How Nettle Saved the People](#). Think with these stories during your walk. How does the story teach us about our relationship with nettle? Nettle made the people strong, I wonder how? See how tall and strong the nettle is standing? I wonder if that's how the people felt?
- ◇ Think about the stories you are telling, how do these stories connect us to our ancestors? What stories will children tell when they are elders? What kinds of stories will our descendents tell about us?

Supporting Learning & Wellbeing

- ◇ Before heading out, talk about the purpose of your harvest. Make sure that you will be able to make something with what you take.
- ◇ As you look at other relatives, try not to get caught up in plant identification only. Focus on what you notice about the plant and what relationships are around. Look at this plant, it has very spiky leaves. I wonder what these spikes are for?
- ◇ Once you find a patch of nettle, think about the health of that place. Does this nettle look strong? How many can we harvest for ourselves while making sure there is enough for others and for the future generations of nettle? Who else is in relation with nettle?
- ◇ If you are harvesting new nettle plants, clip off only the top 3-5 leaves. If harvesting late season, clip at the base of the stem, slip off the leaves for tea and use the stem for cordage.

Making Relations with Lands & Waters

- ◇ Think about how you might be connected to the nettle you are going to visit. Look for water that might have visited nettle at some point. Look at how the land changes as you travel to your destination. When you arrive, be sure to honor the people whose DNA lives in the soil and the trees.

Decolonization, Resurgence & Good Relations

How can we honor, not only our relationship with the nettle community, but with other human and more-than-human communities? With colonization, many of our ecosystems have become unbalanced. What choices can we make to center nettle as our honored relative in each moment?