

Spotlight species: **Nettles**



FUN FACTS

Did you know...

- Nettles are a really important food source for lots of insects. The caterpillars of comma, painted lady, peacock, red admiral and small tortoiseshell butterflies all eat nettles, as well as the caterpillars of some moths. Ladybird larvae also eat nettles. Adult ladybirds are great to have in the garden as they eat pests like aphids.
- Nettle leaves are covered in millions of tiny spines, like hollow glass tubes, filled with natural chemicals including formic acid (which causes the sting) and histamine (which makes you swell).
- There are many natural remedies to nettle stings - the juice of dock leaves really does work! But if you can't find any dock, then plantain, marigolds, sage, rosemary and mint will also help soothe the sting.

ACTIVITIES

Try these at home...

- If you've got nettles to spare, you could try cooking with them (they won't sting your mouth!). Young, fresh spring nettles are best and can be turned into soups, sauces, pesto and even tea. Make sure you wear gloves for foraging and blanch the nettles in boiling water to diffuse the sting. Search for nettle recipe ideas online.
- In late summer nettles when nettles have become tall and woody, and they're no longer useful for wildlife, you could have a go at making string. There are online tutorials available - search for nettle string or cord.

