



Klamath Network Featured Creature

December 2011

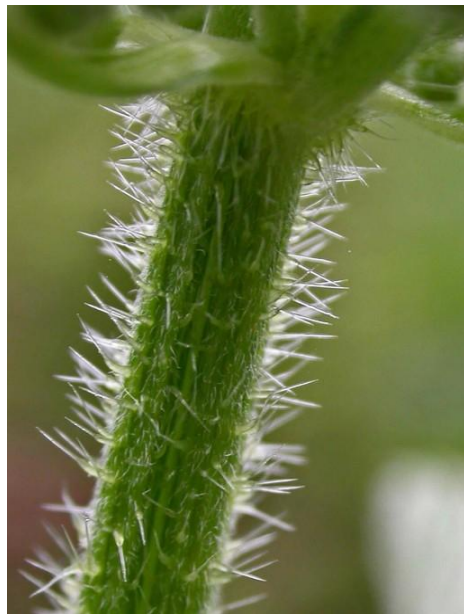
Hoary Stinging Nettle, Slime Nettle (*Urtica dioica* ssp. *holosericea*)

General Description:

Stinging nettle is robust herbaceous perennial plant that grows 3-7 feet tall in the summer, dying down to ground level in the winter. The dark green opposite leaves are 3-5 inches long, 1-2 inches wide and slightly heart-shaped at the base. The margins of the leaves are coarsely serrated. By far the most distinguishable trait of this plant is the hispid covering of bristly, stinging hairs, called trichomes. The stinging hairs that make this plant infamous are found on both the leaves and stems of the plant.



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Stinging nettle flowers are unisexual because they are dioecious plants, meaning they host separate male (staminate) and female (pistillate) flowers. The flowers, which do not have petals, are generally reddish-brown to greenish-white and dangle in clusters where the stem and leaves meet. The flowers bloom from April to October, and will produce a single seed, called a nutlet, which is small, dry and non-splitting.

Where to see in the Network:

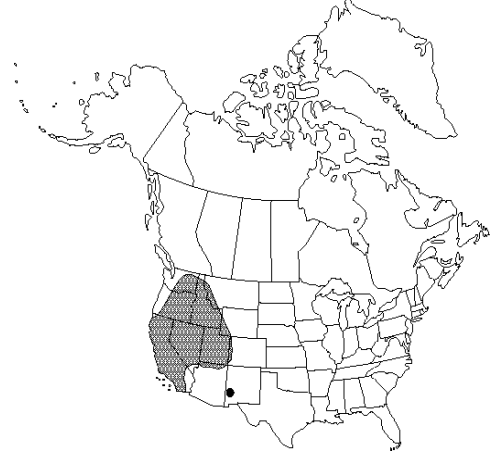
Present in 5 of the 6 parks in the Klamath Network including Crater Lake National Park, Redwood National and State Parks, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lava Beds National Monument, and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. In addition, *Urtica dioica* ssp. *gracilis* may be found at Oregon Caves National Monument.



Image from *Urtica dioica* from Thomé, *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 1885.

Distribution and Habitat:

The *Urtica* (nettle) genus has about 30 species which occur in Europe and North America. While most species of stinging nettle grow nearly everywhere in the United States, *Urtica dioica* ssp. *holosericea*, inhabits only western states; as far east as Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. The plant commonly grows in moist sites along stream banks, on mountain slopes and in woodland clearings. Generally, it grows in rich soils and in elevations ranging from sea level to 3,000 meters. Stinging nettle grows in stands connected by underground roots.



Map from Flora of North America

Ethnobotany:

Stinging nettle has been used as a medicinal herb in Europe for nearly 2,000 years. Nettle is known to be highly nutritive. It is rich in chlorophyll, beta carotene, vitamins A, C, E and K, several of the B vitamins, tannins, volatile oils, flavonoids, iron, calcium, potassium, phosphates, and various other minerals, especially silica. Today nettle is recognised as having astringent, expectorant, galactagogue, tonic, anti-inflammatory, hemostatic, and diuretic properties. Every part of the plant may be utilized as herbal medicine and it revered for its healing properties.