

Urtica dioica* L.*Family: Urticaceae**

A widely known Himalayan plant, *Urtica* is especially infamous for its stinging thorns and skin irritations, hardly anyone who came in contact can forget its itchy touch. Though popularly known as ‘*Bichhuboti*’ or ‘*Stinging nettle*’, its deep culinary connection is far from what can be imagined. In the trans-Himalayan tracts, the plant along with many others is collected by upper-hill people to exchange with barley, wheat, potato, and pea from lower valley people. It has acceptance among montane people who prefer it in soup or curry making, for example, the leaves are popularly used to prepare soup in Sikkim. The collected leaves are boiled in water to remove the thorns and then mixed with oil, garlic, ginger, salt, and pepper to prepare the “*Sishnu ko jhol*” or “*Nettle soup*”. However, other forms of delicacy are also in vogue, as in Himachal and Uttarakhand regions, the leaves (locally known as *Kandali*) are used as vegetable after removing the stinging thorns in hot water. It has many takers in the urban market too, where nettle leaf tea is a fad. To make nettle tea, the dried leaves alone or with tea leaves are boiled and sweet-charged with honey. The ‘boutique’ tea is rich in iron, calcium, and magnesium and is a solace for tired souls.

