

The Nettle Preparation (No 504) Alan Brockman

Although the common stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is well known, it may begood to briefly consider its outer appearance. It stands very erect and with an intense green in the leaves and to a lesser extend in the florets. The stem is square in cross section. The leaves are heart-or lanceolate shaped with the small stinging hairs covering the surfaces. Perhaps one could see the nettle as a challenge to our courage and resolve to go out and grasp it!

In the "Agricultural Course" Dr. Steiner describes it as almost irreplaceable and compares its activity in nature to that of the human heart in the body. This would indicate a sun-like quality which could be intensified by burying it for a whole year. The nettles would then undergo one whole pulse of the Sun/Earth rhythm. The stem's square cross section should also tell us something: the ratio of 1:4 is that of the breath to the heart beat. Again, in the florets we have & four-folding appearing. So we see in the strong erectness the single earth/sun line in connection with the squared stem - the form of the life ether forces.

Regarding the position of the florets, these spring from the leaf axils reaching some way down the stem. This indicates, as in the legumes, that the astralising forces are reaching down into the leaf sphere. The connection with nitrogen formation is thus not such a surprise nor, thinking further, that the preparation itself should impart a certain sentience, almost "intelligence" to the soil. This Dr. Steiner describes as the ability to adjust the soil to the requirements of the plants growing there. In his remarks about the activity nitrogen, in the original translation we have "... This fellow nitrogen is a very clever fellow. He will inform you of what Mercury, Venus, and the rest of them are doing. He knows it all, he really senses it. In meditation we come into a different relation to the nitrogen around us as this is the point where the spiritual in our inner life begins to have a certain bearing on our work as farmers.

This would seem to indicate that in situations where meditation is somewhat lacking then we should use plenty of nettle preparation!

The important process of nitrogen formation and husbandry is one which involves all of the first three preparations, yarrow, chamomile and nettle. These mediate the forces of the inner planetary spheres and indicate something of great interest.

In the description of the formation of the four Kingdoms of Nature and the four states of matter, from warmth to solids, we learn how these have come about in four mighty stages of evolution. It appears like a cosmic breathing process, each breath condensing and contracting the whole of creation, each time a little further. In the present solar system we see Saturn marking out the boundary of the old Saturn sphere, Jupiter that of Old Sun, Mars that of Old Moon. In Earth evolution the contraction is as far as the Sun sphere - the sphere of the spirits of form (Exusiai,

Elohim). Here the picture becomes very complicated as Earth and Sun follow each other on a lemniscatory path taking it in turns to be at the dynamic centre of the solar system as I understand it. The fourth stage of contraction/condensation must therefore involve the whole Sun/Earth sphere - the sphere of the spirits of form.

In this connection the nettle whose forces representing "the heart in nature" must therefore be strongly connected with the Sun - is that preparation which brings the Sun/Earth sphere forces, as regards forces of sentience and intelligence in the soil into the right relationship with the forces of the outer planets.

In the relationship of the nettle to iron (and Mars) whose currents it bears, we have something very significant. Dr. Steiner describes those relations as being almost as beneficent to nature as the iron radiations in our blood are for us. One sees here perhaps a little of the significance of the orbit of Mars which allows it to dive every so often into the Sun/Earth sphere.

Indeed Culpepper associates nettle to the Mars sphere. This movement does not happen with the perfect symmetry of Venus' movements which are more reminiscent of the regularity of the Sun itself but it comes within sight of a regular pattern (see Hazel Straker's diagrams). Here then we see the capacity of the nettle to moderate the iron influences in nature, again perhaps in a certain way similar to the way we can moderate the iron forces in our blood, through taking in the sun forces of Christianity; "...it should really grow around our heart," as it says in the Agricultural Course.

Regarding the changes that go on when the nettle preparation is made we have the following spectrographic analysis results obtained by Dr.E.Pfeiffer.

Analysis of nettle and preparation No 504

Increase as preparation	Maintained as prep.	Decrease as prep
Alum 0.1 to 1.0%	Silver faint trace	Potassium 1.2% to 0.19
Sodium 0.1 – 1.0%	Chromium 0.001 to 0.01%	
Nickle 0 to 0.001%	Copper 0.01%	
Titanium 0.01 0.1%	Calcium 1 to 10%	
Zircon 0 to 0.001	Manganese 0.001 to 0.01	
Molybdenum x 100	Magnesium 5%	
Vanadium x 100	Leax 0.0001 to 0.01%	
*Last 2 stimulate N fixing bacteria		

The analysis of the nettle plant itself shows in comparison with other plants the following figures, % by wt.

	nettle leaves	Lucerne	Lettuce	winter wheat	Spinach	
Protein	81.3	16.2	1.2	10.2	2.3	
Fat	7.7	2.1	0.2	2	0.3	

The main constituents of ash:

Ca) (Calcium oxide) = 29%

Si O₂ (silica) = 6%

K₂O (Potassium oxide) = 13%

P₂O₅ (Phos. Pentoxide) = 5%

MgO (Magnesium oxide) = 5%

Fe₂O₃ (Iron oxide) = 5%

The soil around the roots of the nettle is particularly rich in minerals and has an excellent structure whilst compost made from whole nettle plants is one of the very best in our experience. In addition the "jauche" liquid manure made from fermented nettle leaves (10 days plus) is a most effective liquid x manure spray. It is a wonderful tonic for leaf growth used at a dilution of 2:10. Whilst at a dilution of 1:3 or 4 it will control aphids on beans. A 24 hour ferment provides more of an insecticidal effect. We have not tried this ourselves, preferring the longer term ferment which can also be kept for some time allowing a series of sprays to be applied.

All these possibilities bear out Dr.Steiner's remark about the nettle as being a "Jack of all Trades" and being able to do very, very much! He is not usually given to such praise, so it must be well and truly earned!

Nettles are almost always found near human habitations or on the site of previous habitations. Biblical references seem to indicate that nettle steps in when human activity decreases. Maybe we can see here a kind of "Nature Heart" trying to replace what the human heart had normally brought to that area. Our task would now seem to be to work together with the nettle and its preparation to bring new and stronger forces of sentience to the soil so that it can really receive the plants into an "understanding" environment.

With such thoughts perhaps we can see the nettle with new eyes, as not only a challenge to our ego forces of uprightness and courage but also as a blessing from the heart of nature. (Diagram as

in spiritual Hierarchies, Dusseldorf 1909)