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## How to strip & prepare Nettle fibres for cordage making

If you are going to collect a lot of Nettles I suggest you wear gloves. However you can strip a nettle of its leaves and stings bare handed without getting stung in the same manner.

Cut the Nettles off at the base, then starting from the bottom, hold a Nettle with one hand and with your other hand grasp the nettle and run your hand all the way to the top of the nettle. Any leaves that have not been stripped can be pulled off the stem. You can run your hand up the stem another couple of times to ensure that the stings have been removed.

Choose the tallest nettles, purple coloured nettles tend to have stronger fibres but green ones are very strong too.

Only use fresh Nettles to make cordage from. You can't strip good long strong fibres from the old dead stems.



Once the Nettles are stripped down you can take each stem and LIGHTLY tap them with a batten to flatten them out. You will notice that each stem is hollow in the centre like a tube, except at the nodes where the leaves grow.



Alternatively you can just flatten them by squeezing them between your fingers. Either way, work your way up each stem from end to end.



Once the tube-like structure of the stem is flattened you can open the stem out flat. Prize open the stem with your finger nails.



Opened out stem...



On the inside of the Nettle there is a harder almost woody material and the outside of the nettle is like the Nettles bark, this flexible 'bark' is the part which we want because it is full of strong hair thin fibres.

To separate the two out, snap the woody material in the centre just by bending it. You can now pull the outside of the Nettle away from the woody centre.



A quick way to pull the two apart is to loosely hold the 'bark' fibres between your thumb and first finger as shown in the picture, then pull on the end of the bark layer, the bark layer will run between your fingers, the hard woody layer will be separated and run over the top of your thumb. (Its easier to do than explain...)



Because you snapped the woody layer in the centre you have to go back and strip off the other half too, starting from the centre again.





on the left of my hand is the woody material and on the right is the fibrous outer bark material



You can then separate each length of fibres into about 4 separate lengths. You may notice that the length of fibres you have stripped from the stem looks to be made up of 4 lengths, they just need pulling apart, the split will run straight.



lengths of fibres from one Nettle



Many many Nettles worth of Fibres, it is quite time consuming to process this many Nettles.



These fibres now need to be left to dry. Hang them up outside in the sun and breeze for them to dry quickly. They dry in just a few hours on a hot day, or if you take them indoors they will be dry by the morning.



The dried fibres...

As the fibres dry they shrink a lot and end up quite thin.

It is best to re-hydrate the fibres in water before you start making cordage.

**These fibres can now be twisted together to make cordage. For a full article on how to do this see [HERE](#)**

