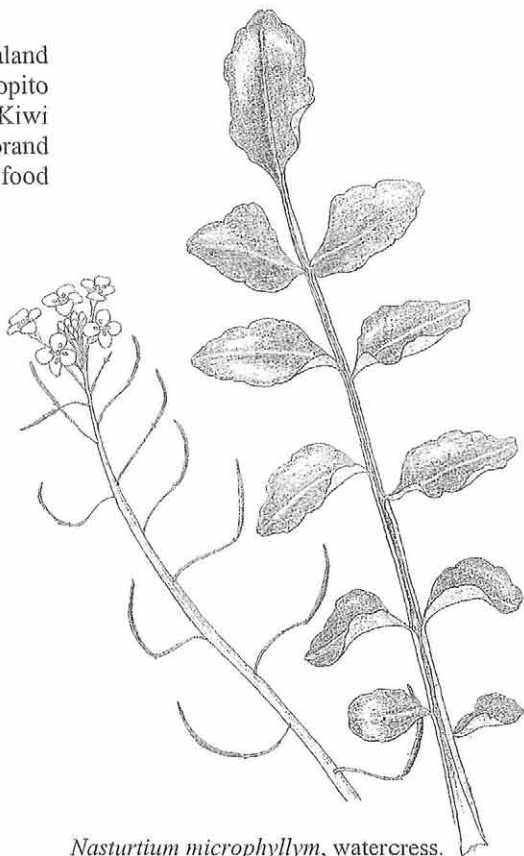


natives, try serving with New Zealand avocado oil flavoured with horopito extract to add a distinctive and zany Kiwi flavour! (Sold under "The Grove" brand name and available at specialty food stores.)



Urtica dioica L.

Urtica dioica, common perennial nettle.
Naturalised in New Zealand.
WH Fitch et al., *Illustrations of
The British Flora*, Kent, 1949



Nasturtium microphyllum, watercress.
Naturalised in New Zealand.
Hugh D Wilson, *Field Guide: Stewart Island
Plants*, Christchurch, 1982

Nettles, prostates and penguins

Allison Knight

Two recent articles mentioning nettles in the Otago Daily Times caught my eye. Here are some excerpts I thought you might enjoy.

On **prostates**, Dr John Briffa in London writes in the Guardian "...After about the age of 50, the prostate gland can enlarge, usually as a result of benign prostatic hypertrophy, or BPH. While BPH is the most common cause of prostatic enlargement, prostate cancer is a possibility, too. For this reason, men with an enlarged prostate should always seek medical advice.

BPH often responds to entirely natural treatment. Certain healthy fats – essential fatty acids found in foods such as nuts and seeds – seem to contribute to prostate health. Zinc is also believed to help. Pumpkin seeds contain useful quantities of both essential fatty acids and zinc. Studies on the effect of pumpkin-seed extract therapy on BPH

symptoms have produced promising results. Eating a handful or two of pumpkin seeds a day might keep symptoms at bay.

Another popular natural remedy is Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). Some of this herb's action on the body seems to be mediated through testosterone, a hormone some scientists believe is a vital factor in BPH development. It helps to slow the conversion of testosterone into the more potent dihydro-testosterone, and has been found to block the action of dihydro-testosterone on the prostate. More than one study has found that it can control symptoms of BPH in the long term. In fact, the evidence suggests that it is as effective a treatment as the most commonly described drug for BPH (finasteride, or Proscar).

For men with BPH, I tend to recommend the supplement Prostate Support, which contains Saw palmetto, zinc, pumpkin seed oil, stinging nettle and African pygeum. Natural remedies have much to offer men suffering from BPH, especially those attempting to rediscover their inner child and his pee-up-the-wall potential."

On **penguins**, nettles and names, Shirley Stuart, the native plant curator at the Dunedin Botanic Garden, has written a very informative article on the distribution, habitat and stinging potential of five native nettles (*Urtica aspersa*, *U. australis*, *U. ferox*, *U. incisa*, *U. lineaerifolia*) and two naturalised species (*U. dioica* and *U. urens*)

On penguins she writes "...Although regarded as a fearsome plant, the tree nettle, or ongaonga, *Urtica ferox*, plays an important part in its environment. It is an important food plant for butterflies and also helps to protect penguin habitats; apparently, it doesn't affect these little birds and they will quite happily waddle through bushes in places like Otago Peninsula's Victory Beach to get to their nests."

On **names**, Shirley says "*Urtica* is an ideal generic name for nettles. It is related to the Latin verbs *urere*, which means to burn, and *urticare*, to sting. The word nettle is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *noedl*, meaning needle. While this seems to point, excuse the pun, to its fierce sting, it could also refer to the use of nettle fibre in making thread."

Philosophical Quote

Monica Peters

Letter to a Lady on Frutification and Liliaceous plants

Dated the 22nd of August 1771

'I ... (am) convinced that, at all times of life, the study of nature abates the taste for frivolous amusements, prevents the tumult of the passions, and provides the mind with a nourishment which is salutary, by filling it with an object most worthy of its contemplations...'

Jean-Jaques Rousseau. *Letters on the Elements of Botany: Addressed to a Lady.* 1785; tr. Thomas Martyn, 1785.