

Nettleware



The Nepalese Himalayan foothills are home to a particularly hardy native nettle, the allo. Harvested by remote hill tribes, the allo has become the surprising clothing hit in the West

Above: hardy nettle Harvesting – the allo nettle in the Himalayan foothills

THINK OF NETTLES and what springs to mind? In Britain at least, probably the ubiquitous stinging nettle. Yet, the nettle plant, also turn out to be one of the more useful plants when it comes to natural fibres. Up until the 17th century Scotland nettles were used in clothing, and during the First World War, the German army, running short of cotton, began to manufacture uniforms from the plant material. The use of nettle fibre for clothing by traditional cultures has been found across different parts of the world where conditions are right. In Nepal a particularly hardy giant nettle, known as *allo*, (or following Linneas, *Girardinia diversifolia*), continues to be at the heart of some indigenous people's traditional farming cultures and ways of life for over 2000 years.

Allo grows widely in the wooded foothills of the Himalayas, in moist soils and under forested canopies,