

**Urtica urens L. (Urticaceae)**  
**Dwarf Nettle**

**Description.** Monoecious annuals; stems 15-50 cm tall, erect, simple or branched from the base, bristly with stinging hairs. Leaves opposite, stipulate (stipules 1-3 mm long, oblong), long-petiolate, upper ones usually larger than lower, blades 1-4 cm long, elliptic to ovate, nearly glabrous, margins deeply serrate. Flowers in dense, axillary, oblong clusters; calyx ca. 2-3 mm long, the staminate sepals equal, partly fused, the pistillate ones unequal, ± free, with ciliate margins; corolla absent; stamens 4 ; ovary superior, with one style. Fruit an achene, 1.5-2.5 mm long, triangular. In California, flowering from February to July. (Clapham et al. 1962, Abrams 1944, Fernald 1950, Gleason and Cronquist 1991, Woodland 1993, Munz 1959).

**Note:** Dwarf nettle can be confused with the native, relatively rare *Hesperocnide tenella* Torrey, which has the pistillate sepals equal in size and almost completely fused. Both species often occur in the same or similar habitats.

**Geographical distribution.** A native of Europe, dwarf nettle has become naturalized throughout western and eastern North America, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, southern Africa, and Hawaii. (Arnold and de Wet 1993, Chapman 1991, Fernald 1950, Gleason and Cronquist 1991, Montenegro et al. 1991, Webb et al. 1988, Wagner et al. 1990).

*Urtica urens* was first reported from California in the mid 19th century and had become widespread by the end of the 19th century (Parish 1920, Robbins 1940). It has been reported from San Miguel, Santa Rosa, and Santa Cruz islands (Junak et al. 1997) and is widely distributed in California west of the Sierra Nevada (Anonymous 1998, Woodland 1993).

**Reproductive and vegetative biology:** Most species of *Urtica* are pollinated by wind (Faegri and van der Pijl 1966, Proctor et al. 1996). *Urtica urens* is self-compatible, and capable of self-pollination; seed set, relative to the perennial *U. dioica*, is high, even when plants are depauperate (Boot et al. 1986). Seed dormancy is extended if seeds are buried; long days appear to be a primary factor for germination (Milberg and Andersson 1997).

**Ecological distribution.** Dwarf nettle occurs on disturbed sites, gardens, orchards, and in fallow or uncultivated fields (Clapham et al. 1962, Abrams 1944, Fernald 1950, Munz 1959, Woodland 1993).

**Weed status.** *Urtica urens* is not considered a noxious weed in agricultural or horticultural practice, at least at a global level (not listed by Holm et al. 1977), nor is it considered a noxious weed by the State Dept. of Food and Agriculture (Anonymous 1996). It is not listed as a weed in the United States in Lorenzi and Jeffery (1987).

**Microbial pathogens.** No literature was found that reported microbial pathogens of *Urtica*.

**Insect pathogens.** No literature was found that reported insect pathogens of dwarf nettle, which may be resistant to general insect herbivory (Mutikainen and Walls. 1995).

**Herbicide control.** No literature was found that reported herbicide control of *Urtica*. However, Lorenzi and Jeffrey (1987) listed several herbicides (dicamba, 2,4-d, atrazine, diuron, and mmteribuzin among others) useful in controlling *Parietaria*, another genus in the Urticaceae.

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