

## Jenni Suomela - Nettle as a textile fibre plant in Finland since the Neolithic

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The aim of this presentation was to show some evidence of the use of stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) as a source material for textile fibres in Finland. The time span of the study reaches from the Neolithic to the modern day. Such a long period requires a multi-methodological approach combining evidence from various sources. Results of pollen sediment samples and other archaeobotanical evidence were used to cover the period prior to actual textile finds.

In the presentation microscopic methods for identifying nettle fibres were introduced, and examples of case-studies where the methods were applied briefly presented.

In addition to the material evidence, historical and ethnographical archival material have been used as sources. This also led to an etymological discussion about the words or terms connected with nettle and linen, and what they actually meant at the time.

The study is under construction and will be published in the future. However, some conclusion can be drawn already at this stage. Nettle is an indigenous plant in northern Europe, and it has been utilised as a dietary, herbal and textile fibre plant for a long time. Although, probably due to lack of direct evidence – because of the problematic nature of fibre identification – it has been left out from the lists of acknowledged materials in textile history books.