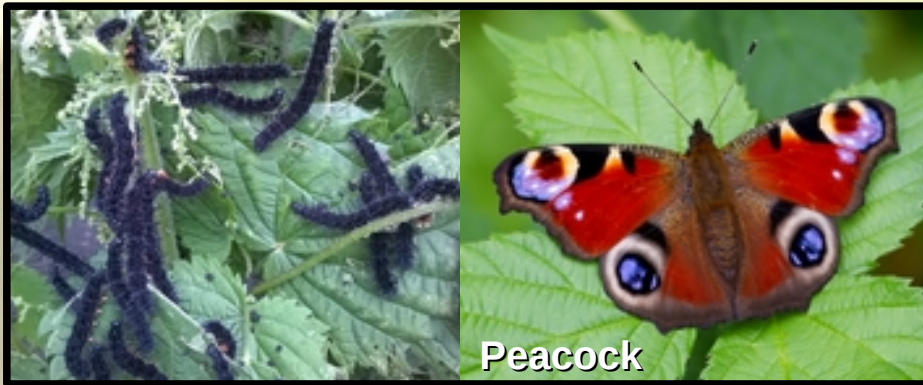


The Nettle feeders

Peacock *Aglais io* Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* Comma *Polygonia c-album*



One plant – four butterflies! If you can find space for it somewhere it is worth its weight in gold for the butterfly gardener. It is also good for Ladybirds as its stings protect aphids, meaning plenty of Ladybird food.

The Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma all hibernate as adults butterflies and emerge in the spring to lay their eggs on the young nettles. The Small Tortoiseshell and Comma have a second generation, laying eggs in July/August and like fresh leaves, so cutting back some nettles to grow again in late June can help.

The Red Admiral is a migrant and usually arrives in May, although a few are starting to survive the winter here. Its caterpillar makes a protective tent by curling a leaf together with its silk and living inside.

Nettles make great soup, are a good substitute for spinach in recipes and if you don't fancy them yourself can make a good liquid fertiliser for your plants.

They can spread by their roots, so either grow in containers or dig up unwanted roots round the edges of your patch in autumn.

