



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St. Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 715-7470 www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds

LESSER CELANDINE

Ranunculus ficaria (*Ficaria verna*)

THREAT: Lesser celandine, also called fig buttercup, is a native of Europe and North Africa. It was introduced into North America as a garden ornamental, but has escaped cultivation. Lesser celandine invades moist woodlands, outcompeting native herbaceous wild flowers. It forms a dense monoculture, very early in the spring, preventing native forbs from sprouting. Although the foliage dies back by June, a dense network of underground roots and tubers remain, inhibiting the growth of other plants. Lesser celandine reproduces by seed, bulblets and underground tubers. Bulblets and tubers can easily be spread when soil is disturbed or moved. The bulblets, which are produced on the stem, can also be spread by floodwaters and heavy rain. Many varieties of lesser celandine are still sold as garden ornamentals, with flower color ranging from white to orange, and foliage ranging from green to bronze.

DESCRIPTION: Lesser celandine is an herbaceous perennial, related to buttercup. The plant has shiny, dark green leaves that are heart-shaped to kidney-shaped, and up to 1.5 inches long. The plants are low growing, less than 1 foot high, and sprout very early in the spring. Where they are well established, the plants form a green "carpet" across the forest floor. Bright yellow flowers, about an inch in diameter, usually with 8 petals, are produced in March or April. The plants produce pale colored bulblets along the aboveground portions of the stem. These become apparent late in the flowering period and are easily dislodged from the plant. The root system is composed of fibrous tubers. By June, the above ground portions of the plant dies back, leaving bare ground.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Any method of control for lesser celandine will require persistence and monitoring. Lesser celandine can be controlled through manual and chemical means. Small infestations can be controlled by hand digging. Care must be taken to remove as much of the plant material (including all root material, bulblets and tubers) as possible. Follow-up work will be required to control any plants that develop from missed plant parts. Contact the weed board for site-specific chemical recommendations.



Tubers (above)



Bulblets (above 2 photos)



Lesser celandine in February (left), April (center), and July (right)