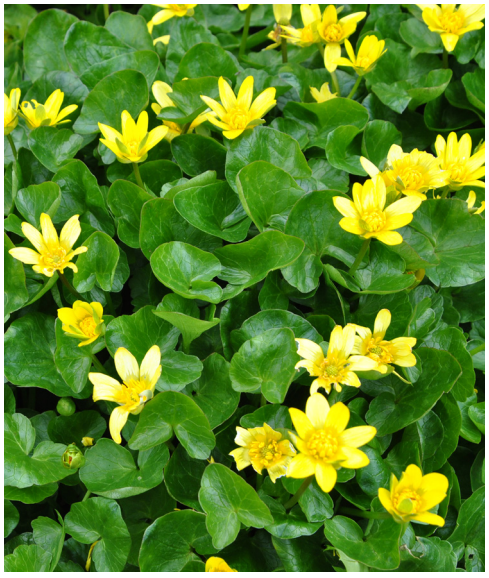
TWIST
DEFENDERS OF HABITAT

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Lesser celandine

Ficaria verna

Lesser celandine flower and leaves.



Lesser celandine.

ALSO KNOWN AS:

Fig buttercup, pilewort, bulbous buttercup, figwort, small crowfoot, figroot, buttercup.

DESCRIPTION:

Lesser celandine is a groundcover. It is easily recognized by its numerous small, bright yellow flowers.

Different cultivars have a range of flower colors from white to orange, as well as a double-petaled variety.

LIFE CYCLE:

Perennial.

Reproduction primarily occurs by underground tubers which break off to produce new plants.

LEAF AND STEM:

Lesser celandine leaves emerge in January. It grows as a basal rosette, meaning that its leaves originate from a singular stalk close to the ground. Its leaves are dark green, smooth, and vary in shape from heart to kidney shaped. Leaves are 1.5-3.5 inches (4-9 centimeters) wide.

Below the ground, lesser celandine grows numerous tubers. Tubers reach 3 inches (8 centimeters) long and resemble tiny sweet potatoes.

FLOWER AND SEEDS (OR FRUIT):

Bright yellow flowers bloom from February through April, before most native plants. The flowers are 8-petaled, solitary, and grow on erect stems that are 4-12 inches (10-30 centimeters) tall.

Plants produce pale colored bulbils when flowers mature.

CLASSIFICATION

Toxic

Common

TOXIC TO:

Cattle

Horses

Sheep

Humans

Pets

REPORT:
Lesser celandine is widespread throughout Washington County and does not need to be reported.

RATINGS

STATE OF OREGON:	STATE OF WASHINGTON:	FOUR-COUNTY CWMA (Regional):
Class B	Class B	Class C

Tualatin Watershed Invasive Species Team (TWIST)
invasives@TualatinSWCD.org
(503) 334-2288
Weed & Pest Directory: www.TualatinSWCD.org/weed-pest-directory/

Tualatin Soil and Water
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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LOOK-A-LIKES:

Marsh marigold.

Photo Credit: (c) Gerald D. Carr, courtesy of OregonFlora

Marsh marigold flowers.

Photo Credit: (c) Gerald D. Carr, courtesy of OregonFlora

DISTRIBUTION:

Lesser celandine is widely distributed in Washington County, commonly seen in yards and natural areas.

HABITAT:

Lesser celandine grows in a wide variety of conditions, from full shade to full sun and in sandy to clay soils.

It frequently grows in disturbed areas, riparian areas, fields, forest understories, roadsides, ditches, and yards.

NATIVE RANGE AND HOW IT ARRIVED HERE:

Originally from Europe, Asia, and northern Africa, lesser celandine was brought to North America as an ornamental flower.

Populations have quickly exploded to become a nuisance in yards and natural areas throughout the Pacific Northwest and East Coast.

HOW IT SPREADS:

Although lesser celandine produces some viable seed after flowering, it primarily spreads through soil disturbance.

Flood events commonly move tubers or bulbils to new locations in natural areas. Digging and moving contaminated yard debris also disperses it throughout urban areas. Moles can spread infestations by disturbing soil and breaking the tubers.

WHAT IT THREATENS:

Lesser celandine displaces native grasses, forbs, and shrubs by creating thick mats that cover large areas.

It is toxic to people and wildlife. Infested areas lack the native forage needed to support woodland animals. It can cause skin irritation when touched.

LOOK-ALIKES:

Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

Marsh marigold is a native perennial that has leaves and flowers which closely resemble lesser celandine. It prefers wet soils and does not form dense mats like lesser celandine.

When inspecting the base of the flowers, you will notice that lesser celandine has four sepals behind the petals, while marsh marigold generally has five sepals.

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Lesser celandine infestation.

HOW CAN YOU CONTROL IT:

Controlling lesser celandine is extremely difficult because of its numerous tubers that easily regrow if left in the soil.

Lesser celandine is toxic. Wear gloves when digging or touching lesser celandine, especially when it is in bloom.

CULTURAL:

Sheet mulching the affected area with a layer of wood chips greater than 6 inches thick will reduce the amount of lesser celandine sprouting. This is best done during the winter. Reapply mulch annually or as needed during the growing season.

Sheet mulching alone will not completely eradicate lesser celandine. Additional control strategies should be used as well.

MANUAL:

Small patches may be controlled by hand digging but requires attention to detail, regular monitoring, and patience.

When digging, make sure to remove all root tubers and bulbils to prevent it from resprouting. Using a fine mesh screen to sift through removed soil will help locate small tubers that may have been missed.

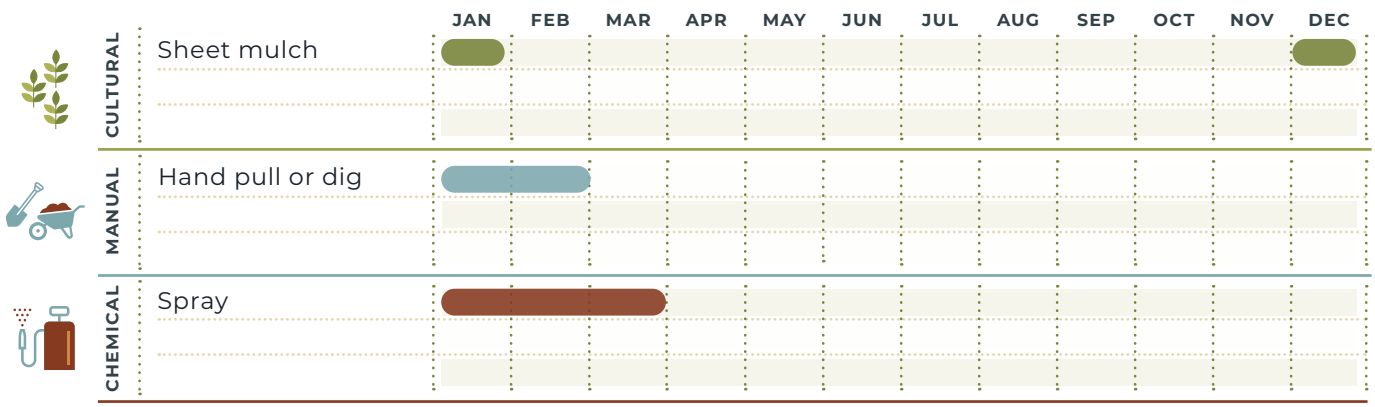
All removed plant material should be placed in a tied plastic bag and thrown away in the trash - not the yard debris.

BIOLOGICAL:

Currently, there are no approved biological agents for lesser celandine.

CHEMICAL:

For specific herbicide information, please contact the Tualatin SWCD Invasive Species Program at invasives@tualatinswcd.org.



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