



LESSER CELANDINE

Lesser celandine, *Ficaria verna* (formerly *Ranunculus ficaria*), is a small perennial member of the buttercup family, Ranunculaceae. Lesser celandine is native to Europe and Asia and was likely introduced as an ornamental plant. Flowers range from white to yellow with 7-12 petals. Lesser celandine reproduces through seeds, bulblets located on the stems, and root tubers. Bulblets and tubers break off existing plants to become new plants.

Lesser celandine emerges early in the spring and actively grows for a short time before going dormant. The plant prefers moist conditions and is often found in riverine floodplains and wet woodlands. Lesser celandine forms dense carpets and out competes native spring ephemerals such as spring beauty, trout lily, and blood root. The native plant marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) looks very similar to lesser celandine. Marsh-marigold lacks bulblets on stems and tubers on roots.

Lesser celandine is difficult to control because it grows in vast numbers during a short time frame in early spring. When the above-ground leaves and stems die back in late spring the plant is difficult to find and identify. Digging the plant out from the soil, taking care to remove the tubers, is an effective control. This is a good control method to use in situations where lesser celandine is mixed with desirable native plants. The time and effort digging requires may not be practical on a large scale. Large populations of lesser celandine may be better managed using an herbicide. A foliar application of glyphosate is an effective treatment that can kill lesser celandine. All herbicide labels must be read carefully prior to use, especially when working in wet soil conditions or near water.

Long term management of lesser celandine often involves a combination of control methods and repeated effort over many years. Management of lesser celandine may be especially difficult in situations where seeds, bulblets, and tubers wash into an area from large populations upstream during flood events.

QUICK FACTS

- Small plant with shiny dark green leaves and yellow flowers
- Grows for a short time in spring
- Reproduces through stem bulblets and root tubers
- Forms dense populations that out-compete native spring ephemerals
- Grows in moist soils and thrives along river banks
- Digging and herbicide are effective controls

