

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Lesser celandine
Ranunculus ficaria

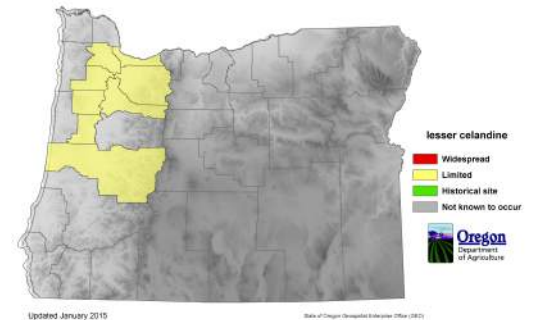
Other common names: Fig buttercup, bulbous
buttercup, small crowfoot

USDA symbol: RAFI
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Planted originally as an ornamental species, it escaped cultivation and now has spread throughout the Northeast, Midwest and into the Pacific Northwest states. It is an attractive easy-to-cultivate plant that can quickly spread throughout a landscape. Reproducing from seeds and tubers, the species is especially difficult to control.

Distribution in Oregon: Expanding populations are now found throughout urban areas in the Willamette Valley. A 5-acre infestation in Wilsonville was converted into a city park. This was the largest known infestation identified in Oregon.



Description: Lesser celandine is an herbaceous, perennial plant in the buttercup family. It has a basal rosette of dark green, shiny, stalked leaves that are kidney to heart-shaped. It flowers from March to April, has eight glossy, butter-yellow petals, and is borne singly on delicate stalks that rise above the leaves. Pale-colored bulblets are produced along the stems of the above ground portions of the plant, but are not apparent until late in the flowering period. When in bloom, large infestations of appear as a green carpet with yellow dots, spreading across the forest floor. There are many varieties of lesser celandine including a double-flowered form with many crowded petals and dark green leaves mottled with silvery markings. The primary reproductive method is the formation of turions that are produced on the roots in large numbers. They are easily moved in contaminated dirt or by water. It prefers shaded to partially shaded sites though it can thrive in full sun with adequate soil moisture. Deciduous woods are an excellent habitat for this species enabling the plant to grow and bloom well before leaf initiation in the forest canopy.

Impacts: Lesser celandine forms dense patches leading to the exclusion of many low-growing forbs especially early-blooming native wildflowers. Lesser celandine escaping from private plantings quickly overwhelm flowerbeds and lawns. Contaminated garden loam applied to new lawns can create problems in a few short years. Because of the bulbous nature of the root system, control can be difficult. Bulb fragments are easily overlooked during manual control, leading to re-infestation. Chemical control must be timed for optimal kill but the nonselective nature of certain herbicides can lead to non-target impacts on desirable plants. Cultivars of lesser celandine continue to be sold through catalogs and nurseries nationwide.

Biological controls: No approved biological control agents are available at this time.

