

TACKLING Lesser Celandine

(*Ficaria verna*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Lesser celandine is a low-growing invasive buttercup, introduced to North America in the 1860s as a garden ornamental. It spreads aggressively by tubers, bulblets, and seeds, forming dense mats above and below ground.

IMPACTS

An early emerging plant, lesser celandine can spread quickly, crowding out native plants in early spring before they have a chance to grow. After its short growing season, it leaves bare patches of soil vulnerable to invasion by other invasive species. Its multiple reproductive strategies make it challenging to control. Toxic to most mammals (including humans) if ingested, lesser celandine can also cause skin irritation.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial that emerges from December to February and dies back June; grows up to 40 centimetres tall with mounded clusters of leaves and taller flowering stems
- **Stem:** After flowering, small, pale, spherical bulblets (also called bulbils) form where leaf stalks grow from the stem; once separated from the parent plant, these bulblets can produce new plants
- **Leaves:** Thick, shiny, kidney to heart-shaped leaves, 4-9 centimetres long and 4-8 centimetres wide; dark green, often paler underneath, and sometimes mottled



Leaves

CREDIT: ISCMV



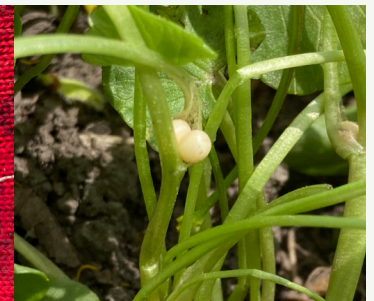
Flower

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Roots and tubers

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Bulblets forming in the stem

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DETECTOR NETWORK

- **Flowers:** Solitary, symmetrical, glossy flowers typically 2-3 centimetres wide with 6-26 petals (averaging 8-10); petal colour ranges from yellow (most common) to white or orange, with a slightly darker centre
- **Seeds:** Small, green, globular shaped clusters of achenes (seed capsules), each 3-4 millimetres long containing a single seed
- **Roots:** Fibrous roots with small, gray, club-shaped tubers up to 8 centimetres long, resembling tiny sweet potatoes

CONTROL METHODS

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, grow or propagate lesser celandine. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent yards, parks, or natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically includes a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling lesser celandine at small sites on private property or where permission has been granted by the landowner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals at sites of any size. **When handling lesser celandine, it is important to wear gloves. Hands should be washed thoroughly after handling, especially before eating.**

CONTROL METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	Hand digging and sifting the soil	Small sites (<1m ²)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a trowel or shovel dig up as much of the roots, tubers and bulblets as possible, then sift the soil through a fine mesh screen to capture remaining fragments• Best completed from January to March, and repeated every few weeks• Will disturb soil, likely encouraging growth of any remaining plant fragments

Sites should be monitored closely for several years after treatment as above- and below-ground plant parts may be easily missed and can produce new plants.

How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade, or grow lesser celandine.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out growgreenguide.ca for suggestions.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Join a stewardship group and help remove invasive species from local parks

For the complete set of best management practices for lesser celandine, and other key invasive species, visit metrovancover.org and search 'Invasive Species'.



Lesser celandine growing in a garden

CREDIT: ISCMV