



LESSER CELANDINE

(*Ranunculus ficaria*)

The survival strategy of native ephemeral wildflowers is to grow and flower early in the spring before leaf-out of the forest canopy. By doing so, these plants receive needed sunlight and can take advantage of nutrients released from decaying material over the winter. Lesser celandine uses the same strategy, but starts growing earlier in the season and is far more **aggressive in its use of space**. Once established, lesser celandine **spreads rapidly** across the forest floor to form a blanket of leaves which native species are unable to penetrate.

IDENTIFY



LESSER CELANDINE | Brandywine Conservancy

CHARACTERISTICS

Lesser celandine is a perennial, herbaceous plant in the buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*). Leaves are shiny, dark green, and kidney-shaped. Stalked leaves may appear as early as January. Glossy, butter-yellow flowers appear in March and April supported on delicate stalks above the leaves. Flowers have 8–12 petals. Above-ground portions of lesser celandine die back by early June. When in bloom, large infestations of lesser celandine appear as a green carpet with yellow dots, spread across the forest floor. Celandine reproduces primarily through bulblets and underground tubers.

The tiny white bulblets are attached to leafstalks and are easily dislodged from the plant. A mass of small, gray, fingerlike tuberous roots underlies each plant. Bulblets and tubers are easily carried downstream during flood events and may be unearthed and scattered by the digging activities of some animals.



LESSER CELANDINE
Brandywine Conservancy

WHERE FROM

Celandine was introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant. Unfortunately, it is still available commercially in the U.S. All varieties of lesser celandine should be assumed to be invasive.



LESSER CELANDINE
Brandywine Conservancy

WHERE FOUND

Lesser celandine is currently found in 20 northeastern states and in the Pacific Northwest. It is reported to be invasive in Pennsylvania and Delaware, as well as seven other states and D.C. It occurs most commonly on moist, forested floodplains and in some drier upland areas, and seems to prefer sandy soils.

CONTROL

CHEMICAL METHOD

Lesser celandine can be effectively controlled using a 1–2% solution of glyphosate (e.g., *Roundup*). Use a wetland-approved concentration of glyphosate (e.g., *Rodeo*) near streams. Apply

herbicide in March when temperatures are 40°F or warmer. Follow label instructions and state requirements.

(Read and follow all herbicide labels carefully before use.)

MANUAL METHOD

For small infestations, lesser celandine may be pulled up by hand or dug up using a hand trowel or shovel. It is very important to remove all bulblets and tubers. When conducting mechanical removal, care should be taken to minimize soil disturbance as

much as possible. For this reason, mechanical control may be inappropriate for large infestations in high quality natural areas. Cutting alone will often not control the problem; many times it will encourage new growth.

REMEMBER

When removing, be careful not to remove or destroy desirable species. Don't confuse with native marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), a desirable wetland plant that also occurs in the eastern U.S. Marsh marigold also has glossy, rounded or kidney-

shaped leaves and flowers, but its stalks are 8 inches or more in height and consist of 5–9 deep-yellow petals. Additionally, marsh marigold does not produce tubers or bulblets, nor does it form a continuous carpet of growth.

REPLANT

Replant area with native alternatives such as:

- Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
- Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*)
- Squirrel-corn (*Dicentra canadensis*)

- Cutleaf toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*)
- Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*)
- Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)