

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Lesser celandine

Ficaria verna



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, Univ. of Connecticut

Background:

Lesser celandine was introduced into the United States as an ornamental plant. It is still commercially available. All varieties should be assumed to be invasive.

Range:

Native to Eurasia, lesser celandine can now be found in the Northeast and Pacific Northwest regions of the United States.



John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy

Description:

Lesser celandine is a perennial herbaceous plant that forms low-growing mats. Plants consist of a basal rosette of dark green, kidney-shaped leaves. The bright yellow flowers are borne singly on stalks that rise above the leaves. Abundant, finger-like tubers are produced by the roots.



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Habitat:

Lesser celandine is characteristic of moist alluvial soils in forested floodplains. It can also be found in low open woods, meadows, roadsides and waste places. It seems to prefer moist, sandy soils. Less frequently, it will invade drier soils.

Biology and Spread:

Lesser celandine spreads primarily through vegetative means. Its abundant tubers and bulblets may be unearthed and scattered by animals, well-meaning weed pullers and flood events.

Ecological Threat:

An exotic vernal plant, lesser celandine is aggressive and emerges earlier than most native species. It easily displaces native spring ephemerals with its thick carpet of vegetation. This, in turn, negatively affects native pollinators, which rely on spring ephemerals for nectar and pollen during a time when other food sources are scarce.

How to Control this Species:

Lesser celandine is very difficult to control. Persistence is key. Small infestations may be pulled up by hand or dug up with a trowel. Be sure to remove all bulblets and tubers. Physical removal causes soil disturbance, which can lead to further infestation. Keep this in mind when dealing with high-quality natural areas.

A wetland-approved concentration of Glyphosate should be applied in late winter to early spring (March through May) in order to minimize impacts to native wildflowers. Be careful to apply the herbicide to lesser celandine only, and be aware of the site's proximity to breeding amphibians.

Look-A-Likes:

Lesser celandine closely resembles marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), a native wetland plant. Please take steps to ensure proper identification before any treatment is initiated.



Brett Pifer, DCNR - BOF