THE UPSTATE CHAPTER OF THE SC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

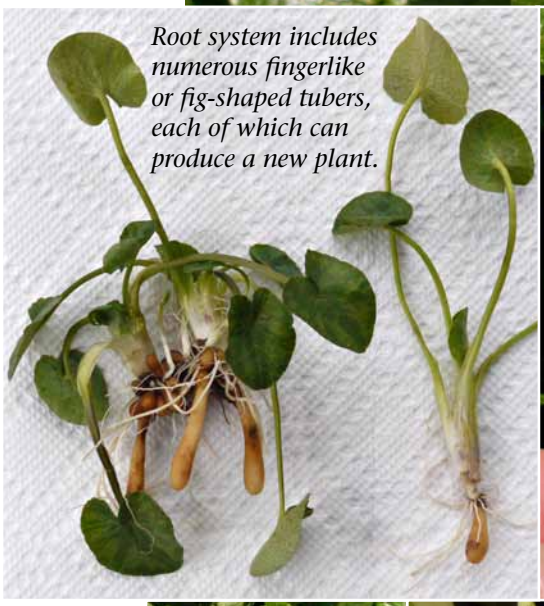
FIG BUTTERCUP *a new threat*

COMMON NAME: Fig Buttercup or Lesser Celandine
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ficaria verna* (formerly *Ranunculus ficaria*)

Fig Buttercup is an early-blooming perennial with origins in Europe and northern Africa that has recently begun to quietly naturalize outside the garden in the southeastern US. Also known as Lesser Celandine, Fig Buttercup makes numerous tubers and bulblets, each of which can grow into a new plant. These are easily dislodged and dispersed by mowing, water events and well-meaning weed-pullers.

It thrives in moist environments and is typically found adjacent to rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, or in wetlands, often downstream of landscape plantings or compost piles.

Its emergence in winter, before most native species, gives it a great competitive advantage. Once established, it creates extensive, dense, monocultural mats which displace and exclude all native vegetation. Its accelerated growth cycle provides a short window (roughly Feb-April) in which it can be spotted or treated.



Root system includes numerous fingerlike or fig-shaped tubers, each of which can produce a new plant.

Netted venation on leaf undersides can be so prominent as to appear almost "reptilian", as shown above.

Plant Type: Vigorous herbaceous perennial that complete its growth cycle in winter and early spring, with above-ground portions mostly gone by late May or early June.

Form/Size: Low-growing, mounded basal rosettes that combine to form extensive dense vegetative mats.

Leaves: Fleshy, glabrous, shiny dark green leaves vary from cordate to oblong; leaf margins can be entire or crenate; petioles have dilated, sheathing bases. Stem leaves smaller.

Flowers: Yellow flowers with a slightly darker center, with 3 (rarely 4) pouch-like sepals and typically with 8 petals (but that number varies from 7 to 26 or more). Flowers borne singly on pedicels.

Family: Ranunculaceae.

Similar Species: Often confused with Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), which does not produce underground tubers or axillary bulblets and will never form extensive continuous mats of vegetation. Its flowers are comprised of 5-9 yellow sepals (no petals).

Report: If you see this in a natural area, send clear photos (of flowers, leaf undersides, etc) and precise location info (using local landmarks and/or GPS, so we can find it) to FigButtercup@scnps.org.

Control: The treatment window is short. Small infestations can be controlled by hand-digging, if care is taken to remove and properly dispose of all of the many bulbils and tubers. It is recommended that larger infestations be treated with a wetland-approved systemic herbicide (such as Rodeo® at 1.5% with a 0.5% non-ionic surfactant), starting as soon as plants emerge in late winter. Herbicide applications late in the flowering period are less effective and more likely to negatively impact native plants and amphibians. Two or more years of treatment will likely be necessary.

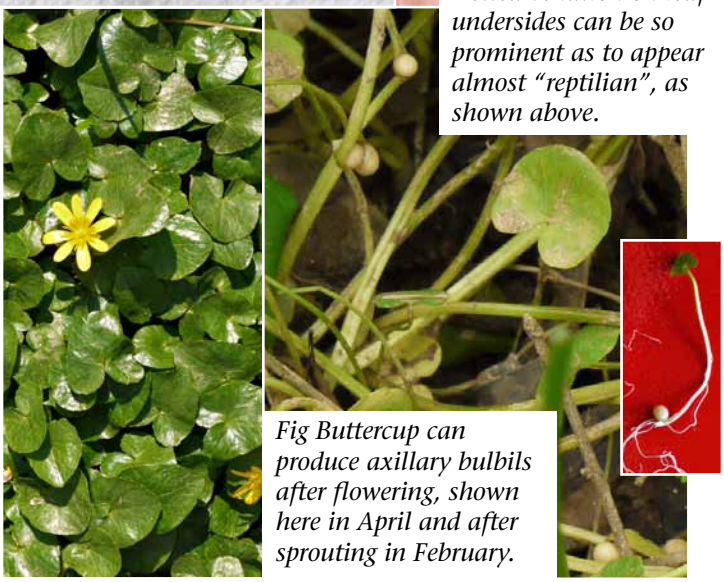


Fig Buttercup can produce axillary bulbils after flowering, shown here in April and after sprouting in February.