



What to do.

If you suspect that you have fig buttercup in your garden or have found it in the environment, please contact the Clemson University Department of Plant Industry or your local Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service office.

For more information on fig buttercup and other invasive species, visit our website or find us on social media.



A partnership to protect your agricultural & natural resources.

Who we are. What we do.

The Department of Plant Industry, a part of Regulatory Services in Clemson University's Public Service and Agriculture, helps prevent the introduction of new plant pests into South Carolina as well as the spread of existing plant pests to non-infested areas.

Plant pest surveys, inspections, quarantines, control and eradication programs are among the tools used to safeguard the state's agricultural and natural resources.

We help horticultural businesses - such as nurseries, greenhouse growers, transplant growers and turf grass producers - as well as farmers, agricultural industries and South Carolina consumers in shipping plant material intrastate, interstate and internationally.

Inspections and certification services help ensure that plants are pest-free, which is essential for movement of plant material to other states and foreign countries.

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Clemson University

*Fig Buttercup,
Lesser Celandine*



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A garden plant gone wild!

Ficaria verna was introduced into the United States as an ornamental plant for its showy flowers. Unfortunately, like many other beautiful exotic plants, fig buttercup escaped cultivation and began to spread outside the landscapes of unknowing gardeners. It is now found in 25 states, damaging natural areas where it is found.

Fig buttercup outcompetes and excludes native plant communities. It emerges before other spring ephemerals giving it a competitive advantage, forming a monoculture, blocking out native plants, reducing erosion control, and diminishing food and shelter for wildlife. Spring flowering plants supporting pollinators are especially affected including wild ginger and trilliums, common in the upstate of SC.



Introduced in the late 1800's, fig buttercup is still available commercially in some nurseries and garden centers throughout the United States. All varieties should be assumed to be potentially invasive and all varieties of *Ficaria verna* are regulated in South Carolina. They are illegal to sell, possess or move anywhere in the state.

Why is it a noxious weed?



Fig buttercup (*Ficaria verna*, formerly *Ranunculus ficaria*) is an early-blooming perennial with origins in Europe and Northern Africa. Another common name is lesser celandine, and it is sometimes mistaken for the native marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*).

Fig buttercup makes numerous tubers and bulblets that can grow into new individuals when separated from the parent plant. These propagules are easily dislodged and can be dispersed by mowing and by well-meaning weed-pullers. Heavy rains can carry the bulblets into downstream waterways, along which they readily take root. *Ficaria* thrives in moist environments and creates dense extensive mats.

Beautiful but aggressive.

Ficaria verna emerges in winter and, because of its accelerated growth cycle, can be treated only during a short window of time (roughly Feb.-April). Above ground portions are mostly gone by late May or early June.

The flowers are bright yellow with a slightly darker center, and typically have eight petals (but may have 7 to 26+). Flowers are borne singly on pedicels and have 3 (rarely 4) pouch-like sepals.



Fig buttercup's thick tuberous roots are easily recognized. These fuel the plant's early winter emergence, as well as function as vegetative propagules.

Late in the flowering season, small bulblets can be produced in leaf axils on two of *Ficaria verna*'s five subspecies. Like the tuberous roots, each bulbil is capable of producing a new plant.



Leaves are fleshy, shiny, hairless, dark green, and somewhat heart-shaped or kidney-shaped. The netted venation on leaf undersides is often quite pronounced and can aid in distinguishing *Ficaria* from early native buttercups.

