

Creeping Buttercup

Ranunculus repens

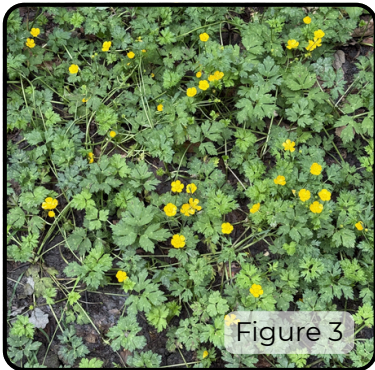


Quick Facts: Creeping buttercup is a perennial forb introduced from Eurasia. It is sometimes called creeping crowfoot or sitfast. This plant is frequently found in wet pastures and uncultivated areas, although it can also live in drier soils.

The entire plant is toxic to livestock, including horses. Grazing animals will avoid it, but may consume buttercup when other forage is not available. Cattle are most likely to consume buttercup, which can reduce milk production and cause milk to become bitter and pink-tinged. Animals may also exhibit partial paralysis, twitching, and convulsions.



Invasion Strategy: Creeping buttercup spreads rapidly through runners that take root and form new plants, allowing it to spread up to 40 sq. ft. in a single year. Plant fragments (stems or roots) can also sprout and establish new infestations. Creeping buttercup can suppress the growth of other plants and form dense stands that dominate the plant community. It thrives in compacted, wet soils.



Identifying Features: Creeping buttercup is a low-growing perennial.

- Leaves are fuzzy to the touch, dark green, and sometimes have light green splotches
- Each leaf is made of three toothed leaflets
- Stems are hollow and fuzzy
- Flowers are shiny and bright yellow with five or more petals
- Under the flower are five small, leaf-like structures called sepals
- Seedheads are distinctively spiky and consist of clusters of hardened fruits (achenes), each containing one seed.
- Buttercup usually grows low in dense mats, but it can reach up to two feet tall



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management
information



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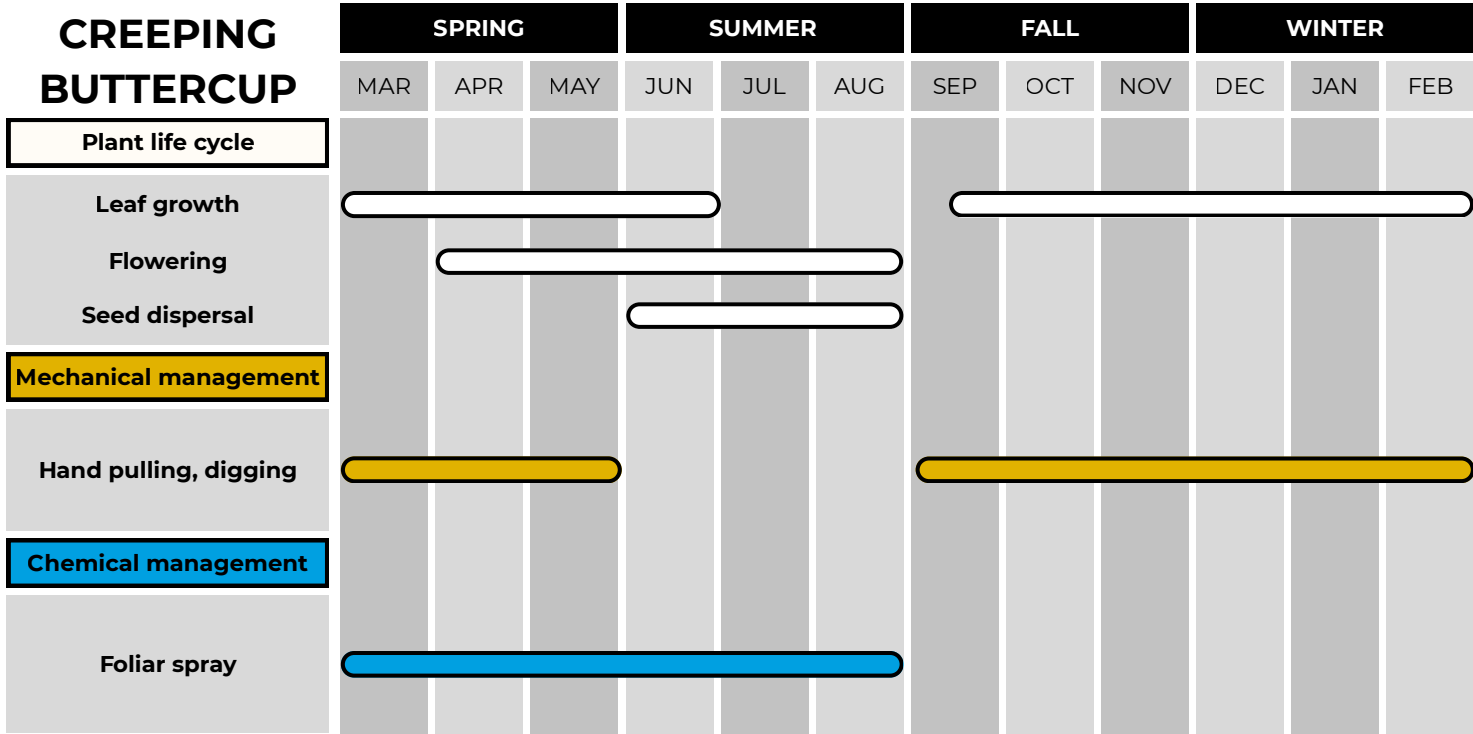


Table 1. This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 7. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

Management Methods:

Mechanical - Repeated hand pulling can be effective in small areas. Prioritize removal when soil is soft to avoid leaving roots in the ground. Mowing is not effective. Cultivation can provide temporary control, but buttercup is likely to regrow once treatment stops.

Cultural - Improving drainage, reducing soil compaction, and correcting low soil pH where needed can make conditions less favorable for buttercup, but will not control established infestations.

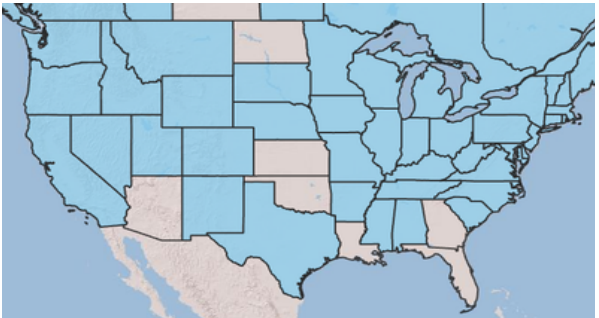
Chemical - Foliar application of herbicide can be effective during the growing season.

Disclaimer - Selecting the best management method for this plant can be site- and context-specific. Check with your local USDA Service Center or University Extension agent to explore your options and determine what is most appropriate for your location and situation.

Management Information:

Dispose of cut plant materials where they cannot resprout. If seeds are present, bag them and dispose of them in a landfill. Equipment should be cleaned after management. Sap can cause skin irritation.

Personal protective equipment is recommended when removing any invasive species, and especially when using herbicides. Always follow label instructions when using herbicide!



Species present Absent

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Look-alike Species: Creeping buttercup resembles several other buttercup species, including western buttercup, which is native to the Pacific Northwest. It can also be confused with lesser celandine, a noxious weed.

Western buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*) typically grows tall and in clumps rather than in a low, spreading mat like creeping buttercup. Western buttercup's petals are more pointed, with noticeable gaps between them. Its leaves do not have light-colored blotches, and the structures under its flowers (sepals) also lack hairs.

Lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*) has kidney-shaped leaves, and its flowers have seven to ten petals. It dies in the spring, re-emerging in the fall from tubers.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

References and Additional Reading:

- Oregon Flora. [Ranunculus repens](#)
- King County Noxious Weed Control Program. [Creeping buttercup identification and control](#) [Management and phenology].
- Oregon State University - Solve pest problems. [Creeping buttercup](#). [Identification and management].
- USDA NRCS Illinois Grazing Manual Fact Sheet. [Poisonous plants: Buttercups](#) (Pasture & Meadows) [Phenology and toxicity]
- Pacific Northwest Pest Management Handbook. [Buttercup, creeping](#) (*Ranunculus repens*). [chemical management]

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- Range map: USDA PLANTS Database
- Figure 5: [Western buttercup, USDA NRCS plant guide](#)
- Figure 6: [Oregon Flora, Ranunculus occidentalis](#)
- Figure 7: [iNaturalist, steffen_burkhardt](#)
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