

Creeping Buttercup

Ranunculus repens



Figure 1



Figure 2

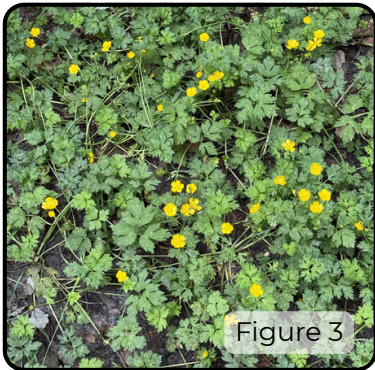


Figure 3



Figure 4

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 can consume buttercup when other forage is not available. Buttercup consumption is most common in cattle, causing a drop in milk production, and tainted milk is bitter and pink-tinged. Animals may also exhibit partial paralysis, twitching, and convulsions. Any plant fragment (stems or roots) can sprout and establish new infestations, leading to rapidly spreading stands.

Invasion Strategy: Creeping buttercup spreads rapidly through runners that take root and form new plants and can spread 40sqft in a single year. Creeping buttercup can also suppress the growth of other plants by removing key nutrients from the soil and making itself the only successful vegetation. 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 lighter green splotches
- Each leaf is made of three toothed leaflets
- Stems are hollow and fuzzy
- Flowers are shiny, bright yellow with five or more petals
- Under the flower, there are five small leaves (sepals)
- Seedheads are distinctively spikey and each spike (achene) contains one seed
- Usually grows low in dense mats but can reach up to two feet tall

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for more
management
information



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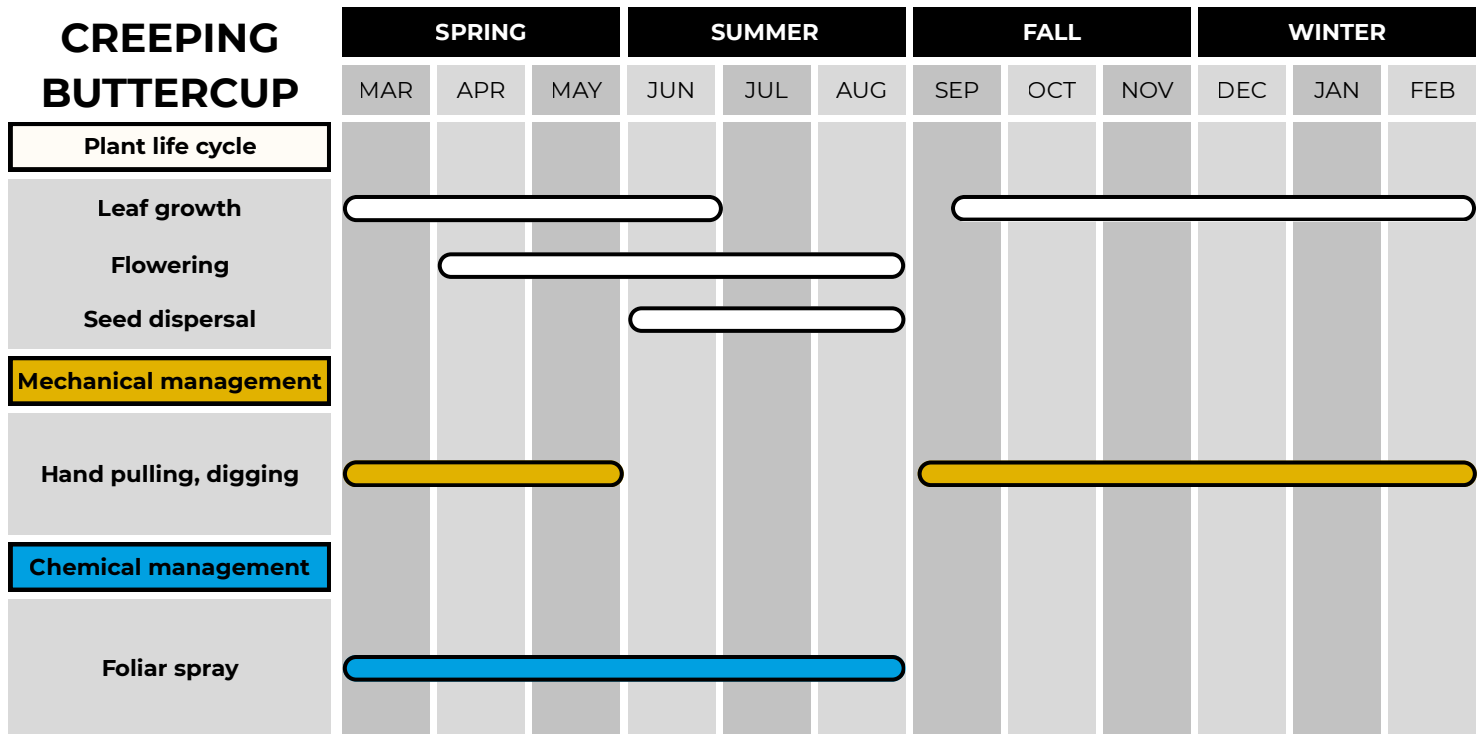


Table 1. This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 7. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

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 and farming can temporarily control buttercup, but it will regrow when cultivation stops.

Cultural - Improving soil drainage, increasing soil pH (adding lime), and reducing soil compaction can reduce the success of buttercup but will not control established infestations.

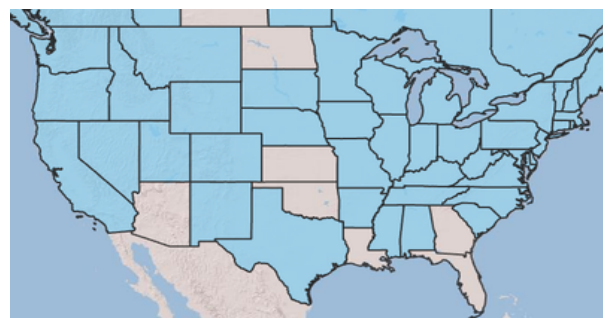
Chemical - Foliar application of herbicide can be effective during the growing season.

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 has more pointed petals which are separated from one another, the leaves do not have light colored blotches, and lacks hair on the structures under the flowers (sepals).

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



Figure 5

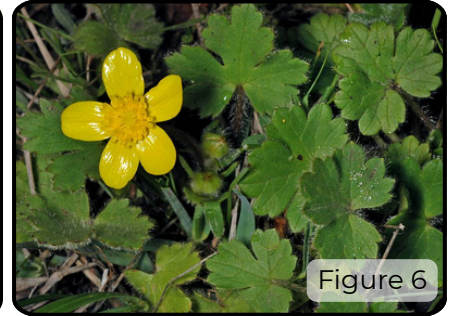


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

References and Additional Reading:

- Oregon Flora. [Ranunculus repens L. creeping buttercup.](#)
- 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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- Figure 4: [iNaturalist, jefferyleeisanaturalist](#)
- Range map: USDA PLANTS Database
- Figure 5: [Western buttercup, USDA NRCS plant guide](#)
- Figure 6: [Oregon Flora, Ranunculus occidentalis](#)
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