Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Buttercup Family

Creeping Buttercup

Ranunculus repens

Identification Tips

- Flowers are glossy and yellow, with 5 petals and many stamens.
- Leaves are green with light colored markings.
- Leaves have serrated edges and are divided into three parts.
- Leaf stems grow up to 1 foot tall. Flowering stems grow 0.5 to 2 feet tall.
- Plants have creeping stolons (modified horizontal stems).
- Root system is tough and fibrous.

Non-native, Invasive Plant - Toxic to livestock

Biology

- Herbaceous creeping perennial.
- Flowers from March to August.
- Can reproduce by seeds and stolons.
- Seeds can be carried by wind, humans, birds, and other wildlife.
- One plant can produce 20 to 150 seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for 20 to 80 years.

Creeping buttercup leaves are green with light colored markings and divided into three parts .

Impacts

- **All parts of plant are toxic to livestock.**
- Symptoms in livestock that have consumed creeping buttercup include inflammation, convulsions, and diarrhea.
- Outcompetes native vegetation, reducing forage and habitat for wildlife.
- Depletes potassium from the soil, negatively impacting the growth of neighboring plants.
- **Sap causes skin irritation for some people.**
- Spreads very quickly; one plant can cover up to 40 square feet in one year.

Distribution

- Creeping buttercup is native to Europe, Asia, and Northwest Africa.
- Prefers to grow in acidic, poorly drained, compacted soil; but can grow in drier sites.
- Invades a variety of sites including lawns, gardens, farmlands, and wetlands.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:
(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or weeds@masoncountywa.gov
https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/

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Control Methods

Creeping buttercup is a non-native, invasive plant and does not require control. Control information has been provided for this species due to its toxicity to livestock. A combination of control methods, carried out over multiple seasons is required to eradicate creeping buttercup. It can be very difficult to control once it has established, taking years to fully remove from a site. **Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control for more information.**

Prevention

Integrating cultural, manual/mechanical and chemical control will be the most effective way to have long lasting control of creeping buttercup. Keeping your yard and pasture densely planted with grasses can minimize creeping buttercup introduction. Avoid introducing contaminated soil or gravel to your yard. Check nursery plants for germinants prior to purchase. Survey yard for creeping buttercup. Clean equipment and clothes after working around creeping buttercup.

Manual/Mechanical Control

Small patches of creeping buttercup can be hand-pulled or dug. All roots and stolons must be removed, as they can resprout into new plants. Oils from creeping buttercup will cause skin irritation for some people, **wear gloves when pulling.** Mowing is not an effective method to control creeping buttercup. This low-growing plant can continue to produce seed and stolons. Replanting can help to reduce creeping buttercup reestablishment. To limit spread of stolons and seeds, clean all equipment that has been used at a site with creeping buttercup.

This low-growing weed can be invasive in lawns, gardens, and pastures.

Don't Confuse Creeping Buttercup With These Other Plant Species.

Ben Legler

Large-leaved avens (*Geum macrophyllum)* is a **native**, plant. Stems are green and hairy. Leaves are green and triangular, with serrated edges. Flowers are yellow with 5 petals and many stamens. Grows 1 to 2.5 feet tall.

Tall buttercup (R*anunculus acris*) is a **non-native**, **invasive** plant. Stems are green and hairy. Leaves are divided into 3-5 deeply divided lobes. Flowers are yellow with 5 petals and many stamens. Grows 1 to 3 feet tall. **Toxic to livestock.**

Cultural Control

Cultural control is an important part of long lasting control of creeping buttercup. Creeping buttercup prefers to grow in acidic soils. Adding lime can improve forage quality and keep buttercup from reestablishing. However, lime won't control buttercup that is already established. Other cultural control methods include improving soil drainage; reducing compaction by aerating pastures; and avoiding trampling when soils are wet.

Chemical Control

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.

Large infestations of creeping buttercup may require the use of an herbicide. Foliar treatment with a product containing glyphosate or aminopyralid is suggested for creeping buttercup control. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide, and will injure all vegetation including grasses.

Aminopyralid is a selective herbicide, will not impact grasses, and has no grazing restrictions. Grass treated with aminopyralid cannot be taken off site for 18 months after application. Take care when applying herbicide to reduce nontarget damage. For the best results, treat creeping buttercup while it is actively growing, and before plants produce seed. The most effective control strategy will integrate multiple control methods.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.