



Whatcom Weeds

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CREEPING BUTTERCUP

Ranunculus repens

THREAT: Creeping buttercup is a plant native to Eurasia that has become a troublesome weed in the Pacific Northwest. Although there are several members of the buttercup family in this area, both native and introduced, creeping buttercup is the most difficult to control. This plant spreads both by seed and by creeping stems that root at the nodes. This allows the plant to outcompete other plants, especially in grazed pasture. Additionally, creeping buttercup can be toxic to livestock. Although buttercup is harmless once it is dry, hay contaminated with buttercup can spread the seed to new locations. Buttercup prefers moist areas, but once established, can survive if sites become drier. In this area, buttercup is commonly found in pastures, gardens, lawns, yards and other moist or disturbed sites.



DESCRIPTION: Creeping buttercup is a perennial herb that grows 6 to 12 inches high, with the flowers growing up to 24 inches high. The stems creep along the ground, taking root at the nodes. Creeping buttercup has dark green leaves that are 3-parted with deeply toothed margins. Both the leaves and stems are hairy. Creeping buttercup has bright yellow flowers with 5 petals (sometimes up to 10). Flowers are borne on long, erect stems and flowering occurs from spring through summer. Tall buttercup, which is also common in this area, has similar leaves and flowers, but does not have creeping stems.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Creeping buttercup can be controlled through cultural, mechanical and chemical means. Practicing good pasture management and avoiding overgrazing are important in managing buttercup. Creeping buttercup can be killed through repeated cultivation, although this will not kill seed in the soil. Mowing will not control this plant. Contact the weed control board for site-specific chemical recommendations.

