Weed Identification and Control Sheet:

GOOD OAK LLC ecological services

www.goodoak.com/weeds

Fig Buttercup (*Ranunculus ficaria*)

WI NR-40: Prohibited

-4 Exotic Invasive

DESCRIPTION:

Fig buttercup, also known as lesser celandine, is a member of the buttercup family originally from north Africa, southern Europe and Asia Minor. It was likely introduced to North America for ornamental purposes as a groundcover. This ephemeral perennial completes its life cycle annually between March and June, remaining dormant the rest of the year. Despite its short growing season, it has a high potential to spread by both seed and vegetative tubers to wipe-out spring ephemeral wildflowers as it emerges even earlier than our early blooming natives. It is also allelopathic, meaning it releases compounds into the soil that inhibit the germination and growth of neighboring plants.

Deliberate planting by humans and the moving of soil containing tubers (often mixed in with other ornamental groundcovers) are the most common forms of spread. It is currently uncommon in the Midwest, and conservation organizations aim to keep it that way**. If you find this Prohibited Species in Wisconsin, you must report to the DNR by emailing:**

invasive.species@wi.gov.

In Illinois, contact the New Invaders Watch Program: http://www.newinvaders.org/

IDENTIFICATION:

Fig buttercup is a small plant, with a height never exceeding 6”. The yellow,8-12-petaled flowers bloom in early to mid spring, The leaves less than 2” across, roughly heart-shaped with a rounded leaf tip. Often the leaves are mottled with small lighter patches or maroon streaks.

Fig buttercup leaves looks a lot the early basal leaves of a few native wildflowers like small-flowered buttercup or early buttercup (flowers are also similar to those fo early buttercup). These native buttercups grow as individual plants, with all leaves radiating out from a central point. While fig buttercup starts as individual plants, it eventually forms patches and then large colonies which are one of the most distinctive features of this species. Fig buttercup also looks similar to marsh marigolds which have larger leaves, flowers and which only grow in wetlands. Even common violets have similar leaves, but violet leaves have pointed tips and the flowers are entirely different.

CONTROL METHODS:

Control is most effective in early to mid-spring, *before* these plants flower. Carefully monitor the area for several years and control any new plants that emerge.

Organic: Digging must be done carefully since bulb-like tubers break apart easily, leaving some behind. Sift through the soil to get every last tuber. Dug plants will need to be destroyed in a fire or double-bag the entire root and soil mass in sturdy plastic bags and put it into the trash. Covering with heavy black plastic from immediately after the snow melts until June could be effective if this is done for multiple years.

Chemical: A foliar herbicide application is the most effective method of control. Glyphosate (RoundUp®, etc.) at 4-5% mixed in water very effective. Control is effective early to mid-spring, before most native plants emerge and before the fig buttercup flowers. If the plants are flowering at the time of treatment they may still be able to reproduce via bulbets. These recommendations are not a substitute for the pesticide label. The label is the law; read it and follow the instructions before applying any pesticide.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), Virgina waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) and woodland strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) are just a few options for native groundcovers for shade, or semi-shade areas.

Updated: 2/1/18