

KC Weed News – April 2014

King County, Washington

(<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-news.aspx>)

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Weed of the Month: [Lesser celandine](#) (*Ficaria verna*), a [Non-regulated Class B Noxious Weed](#) in King County, Washington

Please resist the temptation to use this sunny buttercup in your garden. Although it is touted by some plant sellers as a bit of sunshine to lighten up the darkness of late winter, this plant is very troublesome and invasive in our mild climate. It was added in 2014 to the state noxious weed list as a Class B noxious weed and is under consideration to be added to the state quarantine list and.

One of the more popular varieties is called 'Brazen Hussy', which gives a hint as to its true nature. There are numerous other cultivars as well, some with variegated leaves, copper colored leaves, mottled yellow and white flowers, and other variations. The species *Ficaria verna*, also known as *Ranunculus ficaria*, is native to Europe, Asia and North Africa and has been introduced throughout the world as a groundcover. Poetry has been written about it and in Europe it is anticipated as a harbinger of spring. However, it has more recently earned a very bad reputation. One garden writer even went so far as to call it one of her [Most Hated Plants](#).



Lesser celandine, fig buttercup or pilewort

Because it is an early season bloomer, lesser celandine gets a head start on other woodland plants. It forms dense, solid mats, excluding other plants. The above-ground growth dies back by early summer,

but the extensive mat of tubers and roots keeps other plants from establishing. After it dies back in June, the ground appears bare until the following spring.

Lesser celandine is a Class B noxious weed on the state weed list, but it is not designated for control in King County, so control is not required. However, because of the potential impact, we recommend removal where possible, and we encourage people to avoid planting it or moving it around. Please dispose of this plant in the garbage to avoid spreading it further. We would like to monitor where it is spreading to, so if you see it escaping, let us know.

The plant is in the buttercup family and its flowers consist of 8 to 12 bright yellow petals, with numerous stamens and pistils, and pale green [sepals](#) below the petals. The leaves are kidney to heart shaped, and the roots include distinctive club shaped tubers. Some subspecies grow small bulbils in the leaf axils as well. Reproduction is by seed, tubers and bulbils. The tubers and bulbils make it easy to spread by mowing, flooding or moving soil around even when not in seed.



Lesser celandine with tubers

Lesser celandine should not be confused with greater celandine or just plain old celandine. Those are both yellow flowered poppies, not even in the same family. The main difference is the poppies have four petals as opposed to the 8-12 petals lesser celandine has.

Lesser celandine may be mistaken for the native [marsh marigold](#) (*Caltha palustris*), also in the buttercup family. Lesser celandine has even been planted under the mistaken notion that it was marsh marigold. When you know what to look for, the differences are apparent. Marsh marigold typically has only yellow petal-like sepals, with no green sepals below). In contrast, lesser celandine has yellow petals with green sepals below. Marsh marigold also lacks tubers and bulbils. Also, marsh marigold does not form dense carpets and can typically be found in coastal bogs and along mountain streams.

In Washington, the largest known sites are in Whatcom County, with some infestations covering several acres. See the detailed [Written Findings](#) on this plant by the Washington State Weed Board for more information on history and distribution of this plant in Washington.



Lesser celandine infestation in Bellingham

In King County, lesser celandine has been found in the Arboretum, Magnuson Park, Ravenna Park and south of the P- Patch at Jackson Park Golf Course, close to Thornton Creek and Volunteer Park. It has also been planted in many private gardens. In Seattle Parks and the Arboretum, gardeners have been working at controlling it, but it will take time to totally eradicate this tenacious plant.

Lesser celandine is notoriously difficult to eradicate. It can be dug out, but care must be taken to remove each and every tuber and follow-up is essential. The tubers are not always attached to the plants and can range in size from ¼ inch up to 2 inches long. Plants should always be bagged and discarded with

garbage, not yard waste or compost, to prevent spreading it further. It is very important to prevent mowing or moving the soil around; the bulbils, tubers and seeds can easily infest another site. As with all weeds, it is important that boots and equipment are thoroughly cleaned after working in an infested site to prevent further spread.

If there is an especially large population where digging is not feasible or where it could cause too much soil disturbance or erosion, herbicide may be an option. However, it must be applied within a very narrow window of time in early spring, before the flowers die back, but while there are still enough leaves to translocate the chemical to the roots. Because some tubers will be detached, control will likely take several seasons. Please follow the herbicide label instructions carefully and follow all laws and local rules regarding herbicide use. You can contact our program for more information about herbicides.

The best options are probably to thoroughly dig out the plants and discard them in the garbage, or apply a thick layer of mulch over cardboard to smother the plants. And of course, resist the temptation to plant it in the first place.

For more information on lesser celandine, check out the website for the [Washington State Weed Board](#) and the [Whatcom County Weed Board](#). In Oregon, make sure to visit the [Oregon Department of Agriculture](#) website for more information. Feel free to [contact us](#) if you have any questions about this plant or any other noxious weeds.

Weed Tips for April

Watch for noxious weeds emerging this month.

[Garlic mustard](#) rosettes are getting bigger and are easier to spot in April. This month, they will start bolting and forming flower stalks. [Giant hogweed](#) leaves are emerging and should be easy to spot this month unless they are growing in a blackberry patch, in which case you'll have to wait until May or June for the stems to reach above the brambles. [Poison-hemlock](#) clumps are growing now as well, so check your gardens, pastures, parks and school yards carefully for this highly toxic plant. In addition to the common [bull thistle](#) that is likely showing up everywhere about now, you should also look for the less common but more invasive [milk thistle](#), especially in southeast King County where it is mostly found. [Shiny geranium](#) is visible now, although likely not flowering yet. [Gorse](#) is flowering now. You can recognize it by its spiny stem and yellow flowers. If you have questions about what to do with noxious weeds this time of year, please feel free to [contact us](#).



Giant hogweed emerging in the spring

Pull shotweed now if you want to stop it from spreading. Starting now, through spring, we hear a lot of questions about [shotweed or bittercress, *Cardamine hirsuta*](#). This is that annoying little weed with small white flowers that seems to grow in everyone's garden. It will soon start forming its long narrow seed pods that pop open when you're out working in your yard, and pepper your face with seeds. Shotweed is not listed as a regulated noxious weed in King County, but it is certainly an obnoxious weed for many of us. The best time to control shotweed is when you first see it, before the seed pods form. Then it pulls out quite easily. If there is too much to pull, a thick layer of mulch should suppress it fairly well. Just don't wait to pull it until it dries out or you will spread the seeds all over the place.

Make sure not to confuse garlic mustard with shotweed. Also flowering this month is [garlic mustard](#), also a white flowering plant in the mustard family that forms long, thin seed pods, which pop open when ripe. However, garlic mustard is a Class A noxious weed, so it is much more important to control and is also much less widespread. Where it has become established, it's a huge problem, and control is required by law throughout Washington. Shotweed is much smaller, with tiny lobed and divided leaves. It blooms and sets seed much earlier in the year than garlic mustard. Garlic mustard is usually at least 2 feet tall when flowering and has larger, undivided leaves, and doesn't form seed pods until May through June.



Garlic mustard flowering

It's a good time to pull Scotch broom (and gorse too if you've got it!).

The weather is mild and the soil is still nice and moist, making weed pulling easier than in the heat of the summer. [Gorse](#) is already flowering and [Scotch broom](#) starts flowering later this month, but there's plenty of time to pull these plants before the seed pods form in the summer. [French broom](#) is also one to watch out for now. It should be flowering this month. If you are in King County, we have [weed wrenches](#) you can borrow, but they get pretty popular this time of year so plan ahead. Call us at 206-477-9333 or [email us](#) to reserve one for a week or two and then come down to [our office](#) by the Seattle train station to pick it up. If you haven't used a weed wrench before, don't worry, it's easy to learn how.

What's your tansy plan? It's that time of year to make plans for controlling [tansy ragwort](#). If you had lots of plants last year, especially if some went to seed, then you will likely have lots of rosettes this year where you had plants go to seed last year. Even if you were able to remove all of the plants last year and prevent seeding, there will still be new plants coming in as the seeds stay viable for anywhere from 10 to 20 years. If you have any questions about how to be more strategic about managing tansy ragwort, please contact us and a weed specialist can work with you on a plan. If you see tansy ragwort blooming and not being controlled on roads or in your neighbors' pastures, also give us a call at 206-477-9333, or [report it online](#), so we can make sure those sites get controlled too.



Cows with tansy ragwort in pasture

Watch out for birds in blackberry thickets. This time of year is when many birds are nesting and [blackberry](#) thickets are attractive to many as nesting sites or for protection from predators. Be aware of this when you are controlling blackberry bushes. If you do want to remove blackberries this time of year, only remove about a quarter of the infestation, to give the birds a chance to relocate. For areas that provide important bird habitat (especially where there are few alternatives near by), the [Green Seattle Partnership](#) makes the very good recommendation that you consider refraining from large blackberry removal projects during the nesting season (mid-March to the end of June).

City People's Garden Store first to pledge not to sell plants on King County Weed List

Even though it might lose them some business, this long-time Seattle garden store has committed not to sell any species on the [King County Weed List](#), even those they are legally allowed to sell like English ivy and butterfly bush. [City People's Garden Store](#) had always tried to make good decisions about what to sell, but there were species they hadn't realized could be a problem. This pledge will help them be even more thorough about screening what they sell. They have even decided not to sell any variety of English ivy, even those not specifically listed, because there are concerns about them being invasive.



City People's throwing out ivy

Our program commends them for taking this stance and encourages other nurseries and garden stores to follow their lead. We will be looking into a certification program or another way to showcase businesses willing to make a similar pledge. As the owners of City People's realize, the absolute best way to prevent more invasive plant problems is to avoid introducing them in the first place. See the [Press Release](#) for the whole story and to hear about the wide level of support they are receiving for their decision. If you know of another store that has made this pledge or would like to consider it, feel free to have them contact [Sasha Shaw](#).

Help save trees on Vashon April 26

Ivy Free Vashon, in cooperation with the King County Noxious Weed Program and the Vashon Basin Steward, is holding a volunteer event on April 26, 2014. During the event, we plan to cut ivy from many trees found adjacent to Vashon Highway.



Vashon tree covered with ivy

As you may know, ivy is harmful for many reasons: In trees: it creates a sail effect which increases the potential for wind fall, It reduces access to the tree by wildlife, and vertically growing ivy produces seeds that can be spread by birds. The goal of this event is to increase awareness of the harmful effects of ivy, and with dying ivy leaves, create a temporary visual reminder of the need to control ivy.

We are planning to have volunteers cut ivy from trees, specifically those most visible from the highway on the north end of the island. Tools will be provided. Permission has been secured from property owners. The activity will take place on April 26th, between 9:30 AM and 12:00 PM. Meet the King County vans in the upper parking lot of the north end ferry Park and Ride and then travel to the Highway and cut ivy from trees. There will be free pizza after from Rock Island Pizza for the volunteers. If you would like to attend or have questions, please email [Sasha Shaw](#) by April 18.

Volunteer outdoors for Earth Day and beyond

There are many opportunities to get outside and enjoy some fresh spring air and help restore our parks and natural areas in King County. There is almost sure to be work parties and events in your area. There are some options listed below, but if you don't see something that suits you, contact your local parks department and ask for their upcoming schedule.

For one-stop shopping for volunteer events in King County, check out [The Dirt: Calendar of hands on volunteer opportunities](#). For details on volunteering King County Parks, you can also go to [Volunteer Opportunities in King County Parks](#).

King Conservation District has several volunteer events, including helping in their native plant nursery and restoring habitat on Longfellow Creek. Find them here to see more and to register: <http://www.kingcd.org/volunteer/index.php>.

Several cities in King County have programs where volunteers are working to protect and restore their city green spaces and urban forests. In Newcastle, check out the events of the [Weed Warriors](#). In Kirkland, visit [Green Kirkland](#) or join the Earth Day event at [Bridle Trails State Park](#). In Seattle see [Seattle Parks](#), [Green Seattle](#) and [Nature Consortium](#). In Kent visit [Green Kent](#) and in Redmond see Forterra's [Green Redmond](#) page. [Forterra's Green Cities](#) program is also partnering with a few other cities in our region, like Tacoma, with more being added soon.

To get out of the city, check out the [Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust](#), [Issaquah Alps Trails Club](#), or [Washington Trails Association](#). For lots of links and more ideas, see the [Washington Native Plant Society](#) website or our [Volunteer Information](#) page.

Weed watchers needed on trails and lakes

We have two volunteer [weed watcher programs](#) in King County, one for lakes and one for wilderness and recreational areas in the Middle Fork/Upper Snoqualmie area. If you like to identify plants and would like to help us on lakes or trails, we need your help. Please attend one of our upcoming training classes or [contact Sasha Shaw](#) for more information or to sign up. You can also register online through the [Weed Watcher Online Reporting Site](#) (after creating a user ID).

[Trail Weed Watcher Program](#)

June 1, 9am to 4pm, [North Bend Ranger Station](#), 902 SE North Bend Way, North Bend, WA 98045, back conference hall (we will also have group survey hikes for additional plant ID and survey practice to be scheduled later)

[Lake Weed Watcher Program](#)

June 28, 10 am to 2pm, Lake Desire Clubhouse, 18118 172nd Ave SE Renton, WA 98058



Weed watcher on the hunt

Listing proposals for the 2015 State Noxious Weed list accepted until April 30

Every year, the [Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board](#) adopts a new Noxious Weed List ([WAC 16-750](#)). Weed species may be added or removed, the Class (A, B, or C) can be changed, or the required control area of a Class B Designate may be changed. Currently the state weed board is accepting proposals for the 2015 noxious weed list through April 30, 2014. Information about proposals and the listing process can be found [here on the State Weed Board website](#).

At the minimum, a request should contain the proposed change to the noxious weed list, along with the rationale behind the request. If it is a request to add a new species to the noxious weed list, it helps (but is not required) to include the species' scientific name, along with the common name(s) and some background information about the plant's biology, ecology, and known distribution in Washington.

Proposals can be made directly to the [State Weed Board](#) or through your local county weed board. For more information, feel free to contact [Sasha Shaw](#) at King County or [Alison Halpern](#) with the State Weed Board.

Changes to the King County Noxious Weed List for 2014

At the annual county weed list hearing held in January, the [King County Noxious Weed Control Board](#) officially adopted the [2014 King County Noxious Weed List](#). To read more about the following changes, see the [Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board report](#).

The unwieldy hawkweed species have been lumped together into two groups: the Meadow hawkweed subgenus and the Wall hawkweed subgenus. Meadow hawkweeds (*Pilosella* subgenus) generally have stolons, few or no leaves on the stems, and smooth or minutely toothed leaf margins. Wall hawkweeds (*Hieracium* subgenus) usually lack stolons, have leafy stems, and leaves are usually toothed or lobed. Both are regulated Class B weeds on the King County list.



One of the meadow hawkweeds

Other changes include the addition of lesser celandine, a non-regulated Class B noxious weed (see article above) and the downgrading of [buffalobur](#) (*Solanum rostratum*) from a Class A to a Class C noxious weed and [velvetleaf](#) (*Abutilon theophrasti*) from a Class A to a Class B, although we will still require control of these, as they are not that widespread yet.

If you have any questions about the King County Weed List, please contact our program at 206-477-9333 or by email at noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov. For more information and photos, please visit our website at www.kingcounty.gov/weeds.

Noxious weed outreach at KCD Native Plant Sale

On March 1 we had our first Program outreach event as part of the King Conservation District's (KCD) annual native plant sale. At the event folks bought a large variety of plants native to the Puget Sound area for wildlife, habitat restoration, and even landscaping. Our program staffed an outreach booth along with about 10 other organizations. We answered questions about weed control strategy, the noxious weed law, and noxious weed identification. A particular hot topic was control of [yellow archangel](#), a very aggressive and hard to control ground cover. Despite the moderately dreary weather we had a steady stream of curious visitors to our booth. We hope to see you at future [outreach events](#) this spring and summer.



Noxious weed booth at KCD plant sale

Where to find our weed info booth this spring

You will be able to ask weed questions in person, check out live weed specimens, and pick up fact sheets and booklets at the following locations in April, May and June (check out our [complete schedule](#) online and if you have a community event that could use a booth on invasive and noxious weeds, please [contact us](#)):

- April 12, [Shoreline Earth Day Every Day Fair](#), 9am-3pm, Central Market, Shoreline
- April 19, [Newcastle Earth Day Fair](#), 10am-3pm, Lake Boren Park, Newcastle
- April 26, [Snoqualmie River Walk your Watershed](#), 10am-3pm, Duvall
- April 26, Ivy-Free Vashon Work Party and Outreach Event, Vashon
- May 3, [WNPS Native Plant Sale](#), 9am-4pm, [Mercerdale Park](#), Mercer Island
- May 10, [Tukwila's Annual Backyard Wildlife Festival](#), 9am-3pm, Tukwila Community Center
- May 17, [Federal Way Farmers Market](#), 9-3, The Commons Parking Lot, Federal Way
- May 29, [Burien Farmers Market](#), 11-6, Burien Town Square Park, Burien
- May 31, [Vashon Farmers Market](#), 10-3, Village Green, Vashon
- June 7, [Issaquah Farmer's Market](#), 9am-2pm, Pickering Barn, Issaquah
- June 8, [Lake Forest Park Farmers Market](#), 10-3, Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park
- June 11, [Sammamish Farmers Market](#), 4-8, City Hall Plaza, Sammamish
- June 13-15, [Maple Valley Days](#), Lake Wilderness Park, Maple Valley
- June 21, [Des Moines Waterfront Farmers Market](#), 10-2, Des Moines Marina
- June 28, [Maple Valley Farmer's Market](#), 9am-1pm, Rock Creek Elementary, Maple Valley
- June 29, [Auburn International Farmers Market](#), 10am-3pm, Auburn Station Plaza, Auburn

Curly-leaf pondweed: the aquatic weed that gets an early start

When folks think about aquatic weeds, especially submersed aquatic weeds, they usually have a growing season in mind that starts in June. However, there is one aquatic weed that has taken upon itself to get an early start on things, the Class C weed [curly-leaf pondweed](#) (*Potamogeton crispus*).

This submersed aquatic noxious weed native to Eurasia often starts growing early in the spring. Key identification characteristics are the distinctly wavy and stiff olive green leaves that grow alternately on the stem (not in pairs like some other similar plants). Curly-leaf pondweed grows in lakes and streams where sufficient light penetrates to the bottom to support the growth of plants.

The majority of the plant's vegetative growth occurs from early spring into summer and the plant dies back by the end of August. New plants sprout in the fall from turions (hard, brown, bur-like buds). These new plants overwinter and have a head start for spring growth as days begin to lengthen. This ability to start growing early in the spring can give the plant a competitive advantage over most of the native submersed plants, which usually begin growing in June.



Curly- leaf pondweed

Curly-leaf pondweed is a major problem in the Midwest and Oregon. The plant can form mats which clog waterways, inhibit recreation, and out-compete native aquatic plants for space. While curly-leaf pondweed does occur in some lakes in King County, it does not appear to be invasive.

As with all submersed aquatic weeds, detailed regulations apply to both manual/mechanical and chemical control of this plant. Please contact our Aquatic Weed Specialist for control suggestions and regulations: Ben Peterson, ben.peterson@kingcounty.gov, 206-477-4724.

Noxious weed recertification seminars

We are taking registrations for our annual noxious weed workshops for vegetation management personnel, landscapers, and others working on noxious weed control. Session dates are May 7 and May 14, and May 21. The agenda will be the same for all three sessions and will include a variety of topics related to noxious weed identification and control as well as the ever popular live weed specimens (seeing weeds in person is the best way to learn to identify them). More information is available [on our website](#).



Registration table at Kenmore class

There will also be a **Knotweed Biology and Control** workshop on **May 14**, 1:45 to 3:30 pm at the Northshore Utility District and on **June 4**, 9:00 to 11:00 at the Preston Community Center. This class will be worth 2 credits and will make participants eligible to borrow the program’s knotweed injectors for their own projects.

All sessions are free and open to the public but space is limited so pre-registration is required. WSDA pesticide license recertification credits will be available (5 credits). [Register online](#) on our website. For more information, contact us at 206-477-9333 or by email at noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov.

New “Weed Wrench” style tools available

The company making Weed Wrenches is no longer making them, but there are a few alternatives on the market now. There are two tools from Canada, the [Extractigator](#) (featured in our December 2013 KC Weed News) and the [PullerBear](#), and one from Oregon called [The Uprooter](#). All three tools operate somewhat like the Weed Wrench and are designed for pulling woody plants with deep roots, but there are differences in design. The product websites offer some comparisons, which are helpful, but it would be good to ask around to see if anyone has first hand experiences to see which product would work best for your needs. Our program has an Uprooter and a Puller Bear to loan if anyone wishes to use these, as well as our Weed Wrenches, which still work just fine (contact us at noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov or 206-477-9333 to reserve one). I have heard from others who have had good experiences with Extractigator as well, but our program doesn’t have one for loan yet.



The Uprooter

Check out the product websites for more information: www.theuproooter.com, www.extractigator.com and www.pullerbear.com.

Weeds, and other things of interest in the News

City People's Garden Store first to make a pledge not to sell invasive plants. Even though it might lose them some business, this Seattle company has committed not to sell any species on the King County Weed List, even those they are legally allowed to sell. [King County/City of Seattle Press Release](#).

Climate change and noxious weeds. New research sheds some light on how climate change will affect noxious weeds (hint, the weeds will be happy). See [High Plains Public Radio](#) and [All Things Considered](#) for a research project involving the impacts of increased carbon. See the December 2013 [Smithsonian](#)

[Magazine](#) for a different research project, and a [Phys.org news story](#) about research showing that invasive plants in the waterways of Ireland will likely benefit from climate change.

New DNA tool helps distinguish invasive and native aquatic plants. A [USGS News Release](#) describes how this tool helped pin down when non-native hydrilla was first found in the Potomac River.

Spartina control in the San Francisco Bay Area turns a corner. A recent story in [BayNature](#) describes the painstaking process of restoring the native spartina while eradicating the non-native species and hybrid without harming the endangered clapper rail.

Lesser celandine alert in the news. The [Bellingham Herald](#) raises awareness about the new Washington State Class B noxious weed lesser celandine, also known as ‘Brazen Hussy’ among other names.

Pesticides and bees. There is a new resource available on how to reduce bee poisoning from pesticides, especially certain insecticides that pose the greatest risk. The information is summarized in the [PNW Insect Management Handbook](#) or you can download the complete publication, *How to Reduce Bee Poisoning from Pesticides* (PNW 591) <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog> (Search for “PNW 591”).

April news wouldn’t be complete without one story like this. See this [HCN Story](#) on a supposed big new invasive animal problem in the west.

Thanks to Karen Peterson and Ben Peterson (no relation) for contributions to this issue. Information on the State Weed Board list proposals was gratefully excerpted from the State Weed Board website.

Please feel free to distribute this information freely and to contact me if you have any questions. If you do not wish to receive KC Weed News in the future or know someone who does, please drop me an email and I'll update the mailing list.

Thank you.

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