

# Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

## Greater Celandine

*Chelidonium majus*



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut  
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### Background:

Greater celandine was probably introduced into New England by European settlers as an herbal remedy for skin diseases. It was reported to be in herb gardens as early as 1672. From these gardens, it escaped and spread across the landscape.

### Range:

This plant is a native of Eurasia, from Great Britain and Russia south to North Africa. In the United States, it is found predominately in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, with scattered populations across the northern Midwest and West.

### Description:

Greater celandine is a brittle, herbaceous perennial with ribbed stems and pubescent branches. Its leaves are deeply five to nine lobed. Both branches and leaves exude a yellow-orange sap if broken. From May to June, bright yellow, four-petaled flowers appear, which are followed by lumpy, linear seed capsules.



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### Habitat:

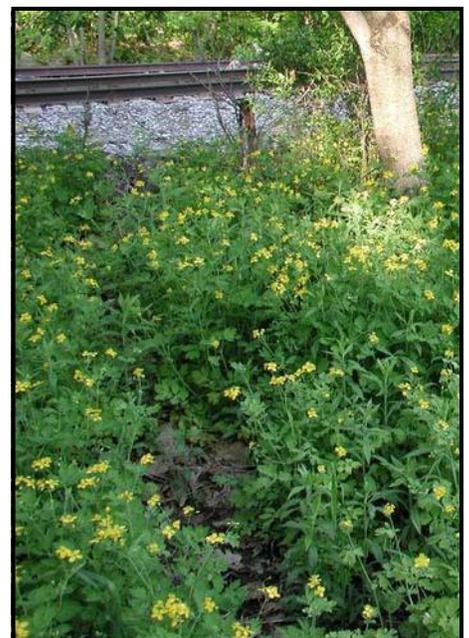
This invasive is found most often in disturbed areas, especially if the soil is moist. Common habitat types utilized by greater celandine include early successional forest, floodplain forest, wet meadow, edge, roadside and open disturbed ground.

### Biology and Spread:

Greater celandine is a prolific seed producer. The small black seeds have elaisosomes, which attract ant workers searching for food. The ants help to disperse the seeds, which easily germinate.

### Ecological Threat:

This plant could become abundant in minimally managed situations, a potential problem for native herbaceous species. Greater celandine is poisonous to mammals, including humans. Its sap is a skin irritant.



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## How to Control this Species:

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### Physical

Preventing the plant from flowering or going to seed is essential.

Greater celandine has a shallow root system and can be easily uprooted. It is effectively removed by hand.

Be aware that the sap may cause skin irritation.



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### Chemical

Chemical control should be administered before seed set. Seedlings are quite sensitive to herbicide applications.



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## Look-A-Likes:

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Early in its growth, greater celandine is difficult to distinguish from the non-native yellow hornpoppy (*Glaucium flavum*) and our native celandine poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*).



Celandine Poppy

Chris Evans, River to River CWMA  
[www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

## References:

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Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health:

<http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=11543>

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County:

<http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/oneida/home%20garden/WEEDS/Greater%20and%20Lesser%20Celandine.pdf>

## For More Information:

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DCNR Invasive Species Site: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

DCNR Invasive Exotic Plant Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers:

[http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/greater\\_celandine.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/greater_celandine.htm)