

Creeping Buttercup

Ranunculus repens L.

Alternate Names

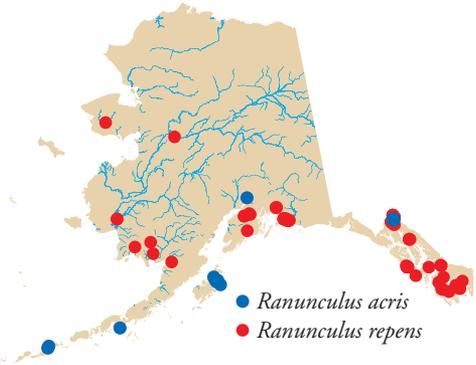
buttercup, creeping crowfoot,
meadow buttercup

Synonyms

Ranunculus repens L. var. *degeneratus* Schur, *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *erectus* DC., *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *glabratus* DC., *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *linearilobus* DC., *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *pleniflorus* Fern., *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *typicus* G. Beck, *Ranunculus repens* L. var. *villosus* Lamotte

Related Species

Tall buttercup
Ranunculus acris L.



XID Services photo by Richard Old

Leaves and flowers of creeping buttercup.

Description

Creeping buttercup is an herbaceous perennial plant with stems up to 3 feet long and slender fibrous roots. Decumbent stems root freely at their nodes and are often slightly hollow with long spreading hairs. Basal leaves are ½–3½ inches long, up to 4 inches wide, egg-shaped to triangular, and trifoliate with toothed margins. Stem leaves are alternate and the lower long-stalked leaves transition upward to simple to 5-parted bracts. Flower stems are long and erect, and flowers are few and showy with 5 yellow petals. Spherical seedheads have about 12 flattened and rounded fruits, each with a short backward-turned beak. The plant overwinters as a rosette with small green leaves.



KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Tall buttercup.

Family: Ranunculaceae

Creeping Buttercup

Tall buttercup is an herbaceous biennial or short-lived perennial plant that grows from a cluster of fibrous roots. Erect stems are up to 3 feet tall, smooth, hollow, leafy below, and branched above. Basal leaves are long-stalked, divided deeply into 3 to 7 coarsely lobed segments, and persistent. Stem and basal leaves have soft hairs on both sides. Long-stalked flowers are composed of 5 shiny golden-yellow petals and 5 sepals. Seeds are disc-shaped and reddish brown with a short hook.



Norwegian Botanical Association
photo by Norman Hagen

Tall buttercup leaf.

Similar Species

Creeping buttercup can be distinguished from native buttercup species by its horizontal growth habit, creeping stems that root at the nodes, spherical head of achenes, and markedly long petals ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch). Exotic tall buttercup can be distinguished from native buttercup species by its upright growth habit and deeply lobed and toothed leaves.



Norwegian Botanical Association
photo by Norman Hagen

Tall buttercup flower.

Management

If hand-pulling is used for control of creeping buttercup, all of the rooted branches must be tracked down and removed (Densmore et al. 2001). This species is very resistant to certain herbicides. However, herbicide application is generally recommended as the best control method for buttercups.

Notes

Tall buttercup was introduced from Europe and is poisonous to cattle. Creeping buttercup, also from Europe, was introduced to North America as an ornamental. It is a very common lawn weed in southeast Alaska. In some cases it is the lawn.