

## Common name Lesser Celandine or Figwort

Latin Name *Ranunculus ficaria*

Family Ranunculaceae

The Lesser Celandine, is one of the very earliest of spring flowers, with it's bright buttercup yellow flowers brightening up the Dell even before winter is quite finished.

It grows mainly on moist corners of shady waterside banks under trees, where its glossy foliage often forms a dense carpet. It is even carved on Wordsworth tomb as it was his favourite flower, and not the daffodil as one might expect

The flowers come into bloom in March a few days only after shiny mottled green leaves appear. The leaves are on long stalks and are very variable, the first being heart-shaped, the later ones bluntly cut into, a bit like a brighter version of ivy.



The blossoms shut up before rain, and even on a bright day do not open before nine in the morning, and by 5 pm they have closed for the night, rather like an old fashioned shop. The petals are green on the underside, so that as soon as the petals close the flowers seem to vanish!

Lesser Celandine blooms to the end of April or the beginning of May, By the end of May, all the flowers have gone and the plant above ground withers and dies leaving nothing above ground to show where they have been. But underground the tubers stay there until next Spring

Although the Lesser Celandine looks at first glance very like a buttercup, it flowers much too early and has up to a dozen narrow petals, instead of the five you find in buttercups.

Because this plant flowers so early there a few insects to pollinate them so therefore they produce very few seeds. They have therefore found another method of reproducing and if you look at the bottom of the leaves are they are fading you will find a tiny tuber which drops to the ground and starts a brand new plant.

### What it was used for in the past

The old English name of Pilewort is due to the fact that it has long been considered a cure for piles because the roots looked something like one! The leaves can be eaten but no one seems to think that they make a very enjoyable meal.

### Sources

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