

BUTTERCUPS (*Ranunculus*) OF SASKATCHEWAN



# Buttercups of Saskatchewan

August J. Breitung

Seventeen species of buttercups (*Ranunculus*) occur in Saskatchewan (Plate 1, figs. 1-17). They are herbs with shiny yellow flowers, or white in nos. 15, 16, and 17. Buttercups grow in water, swamps, marshes, wet meadows and on prairie, depending upon the species. In the following brief descriptions, the 17 *Ranunculus* species are arranged in a natural sequence, the species numbers refer to the figures on plate 1. The figures show a characteristic plant, reduced, and an enlarged achene, which serve to replace lengthy descriptions.

1. ***Ranunculus lapponicus*** L. LAPLAND BUTTERCUP. Glabrous perennial from a stoloniferous rootstock; scape 1-flowered, naked, or with a small leaf; basal leaves 2-6 cm. broad, flowers 8-10 mm. across; achenes 5-15. (*Coptidium lapponicum* (L) Gand.). Among moss in spruce swamps. July.

2. ***R. Cymbalaria*** Pursh ALKALINE BUTTERCUP. Glabrous perennial, spreading by runners; flowers solitary or 2-7 together on scapes or scape-like peduncles, 5-15 cm. high; basal leaves 1-2 cm. long, on slender petioles; petals 5-12; achenes distinctly striate. (*Halerpestes Cymbalaria* (Pursh) Greene). Frequent in wet alkaline soil. June-July.

3. ***R. Flamula*** L., var. ***ovalis*** (Bigel.) Benson CREEPING BUTTERCUP. Glabrous or slightly pubescent perennial; stem trailing, rooting at the nodes; leaves in fascicles, oblanceolate, entire, 1-5 cm. long, 3-7 mm. broad; flowers solitary on slender pedicels; petals 3-5 mm. long; achenes in a spherical head, glabrous. (*R. reptans* L. var. *ovalis* (Bigel.) Torr. & Gray). Damp meadows. Saskatoon, Cypress Hills. July.

4. ***R. glaberrimus*** Hook. SAGEBRUSH BUTTERCUP. Glabrous perennial, 7-10 cm. high, ascending; basal leaves elliptic or oblanceolate, 3-5 cm. long, entire or 3-lobed at the apex; upper stem leaves entire or 3-cleft; petals 8-10 mm. long; achenes numerous in a large globose head. (*R. ellipticus* Greene; *R. Buddii* Boivin). Southern sagebrush plains. April-May.

5. ***R. rhomboideus*** Goldie PRAIRIE BUTTERCUP. Pubescent perennial, 0.5-1.5 dm. high, erect; basal leaf-blades oval, oblong or ovate-oblong, 1-3 cm. broad, crenate; flowers 10-15 mm. across; sepals pilose; achenes in a spherical head, short-beaked. (*R. ovalis* of Britt. and others, not Raf.) Our earliest and most common prairie buttercup, flowering in May-June.

6. ***R. inamoenus*** Greene GRACEFUL BUTTERCUP. Sparingly silky perennial, 2-3 dm. high, erect; basal leaves simple, ovate, obovate, or orbicular, 1-4 cm. long, 1-3.5 cm. broad, crenate, rarely 3-lobed or divided; stem leaves sessile, cut into 3-5 narrow divisions; sepals slightly pubescent; petals 4-6 mm. long; achenes numerous, densely canescent. Meadows. Cypress Hills. June-July.

7. ***R. pedatifidus*** J. E. Smith NORTHERN BUTTERCUP. Slightly silky or glabrate perennial; stem slender, 2-3 dm. high, erect; basal leaves 2-4 cm. broad, pedately divided into 5-7 linear divisions, seldom only toothed; stem leaves nearly sessile, the lobes narrow; sepals with dense ashy pubescence; petals 5 or rarely none, 8-10 mm. long; achenes finely canescent or glabrate. (*R. affinis* R. Br.; *R. apetalus* Farr). Scarce in grassland. Cypress Hills, Luseland, Saskatoon, Lloydminster. June-July.

8. ***R. cardiophyllus*** Hook. HEART-LEAVED BUTTERCUP. Pilose perennial; stem 3-6 dm. high, erect; basal leaves cordate or reniform, 3-4.5 cm. long, 2-4 cm. broad; stem leaves divided into linear lobes; sepals densely pilose; flowers 15-20 mm. across, showy; achenes numerous, finely canescent, in an oblong or ellipsoid head. (*R. pedatifidus*, var. *cardiophyllus* (Hook) Britt.) Prairie on Cypress Hills. June-July.

9. ***R. abortivus*** L. KIDNEY-LEAVED BUTTERCUP. Glabrous biennial or short-lived perennial, 2-6 dm. high, erect; lower and basal leaves simple, 1-5 cm. broad, on slender petioles; upper stem leaves sessile, deeply cleft into linear or oblong divisions; petals 1.5-4 mm. long, shorter than the reflexed sepals. (*R. micranthus* of western reports, not Nutt.) Frequent in moist woods. June-July.

10. ***R. sceleratus*** L. CELERY-LEAVED BUTTERCUP. Annual or short-lived perennial, fleshy, glabrous; stems 1-10 dm. high, erect, branching; lower stem

and basal leaves 3-5 lobed, 2.5-5 cm. broad, on long and broad-based petioles; upper stem leaves deeply divided; flowers numerous, 6-8 mm. broad; achenes numerous in a cylindrical head, apiculate. Common in wet ditches and swamps. June-August.

11. **R. pensylvanicus** L.f. BRISTLY BUTTERCUP. Hairy annual or perennial; stems 4-10 dm. high, erect, branching above; leaves pinnate, the lower 5-7 cm. long, leaflets petiolate, the one 3-parted and again lobed; flowers 6-8 mm. broad; achenes many in a cylindrical head, glabrous; receptacle elongated, 10-14 mm. long. Frequent on damp shores. June-August.

12. **R. Macounii** Britt. MACOUN'S BUTTERCUP. Hirsute perennial, 2-5 dm. high, erect or decumbent, branched; leaves 3-8 cm. long, ternately compound; flowers 10-12 mm. broad; achenes in a globose head, glabrous. Common in wet meadows. June-August.

13. **R. acris** L. TALL BUTTERCUP. Erect, hairy perennial, 3-9 dm. high, branched above; basal leaves deeply 3-parted and again lobed, appearing 5-parted; sepals pubescent; petals 8-12 mm. long; achenes in a globose head, glabrous. (*R. Stevenii* Andrzej.; *R. montanensis* of Sask. reports, not Rydb.). Occasional along roadsides. Natives of Europe. June-August.

14. **R. Gmelini** D.C., var. **Hookerii** (D. Don) Benson SMALL YELLOW WATER BUTTERCUP. Glabrous perennial, floating, or creeping on shores; stem 1-3 dm. long, rooting at the nodes; leaves 1.5-2.5 cm. broad, palmately divided or sometimes dissected into ribbon-like divisions; petals 4-7 mm. long; achenes in an ovoid head, smooth, glabrous. (*R. Purshii* Richards.; *R. Purshii* var. *dissectus* Lunell; *R. delpinifolius* of Sask. reports, not Torr.). Frequent in ponds or on muddy shores. June-August.

15. **R. trichophyllum** Chaix. WHITE WATER BUTTERCUP. Glabrous aquatic perennial, stem branched, 2-6 dm. long; leaves distinctly petioled, submerged, dissected into spreading filiform divisions, collapsing when withdrawn from water; pedicels not recurved in fruit; petals white or yellow at base, 4-8 mm. long; achenes transversely wrinkled, beak none. (*R. aquatilis* L. var. *cappilaceus* (Thuill.) DC.; *Batrachium trichophyllum* (Chaix.) Bosch). In brook by power house in Cypress Hills Park. June-August.

16. **R. longirostris** Godr. LONG-BEAKED WATER BUTTERCUP. Leaves sessile, stiff, not collapsing when withdrawn from water; pedicels not recurved in fruit; petals white, 5-9 mm. long; beak of achenes 1 mm. long. (*R. aquatilis*, var. *longirostris* (Godr.) Lawson; *Batrachium longirostre* (Godr.) F. Schultz). In lakes and streams. Crane Lake, Cypress Hills. June-August.

17. **R. subrigidus** Drew STIFF WATER BUTTERCUP. Leaves sessile or nearly so, divisions rather short, usually firm but sometimes collapsing when withdrawn from water; pedicels recurved in fruit; petals white, yellow at base, 5-9 mm. long, beak of achenes 0.2-0.5 mm. long. (*R. circinatus* Sibth., var. *subrigidus* (Drew) Benson; *Batrachium*). This species and nos. 15, 16 are probably better regarded as varieties of *R. aquatilis*. According to Benson, Amer. Midl. Nat. 40(1): 238, 1948, *Ranunculus divaricatus*, *R. circinatus*, *R. Drouetii*, and *R. flaccidus* are old European names used in America.



## LADY'S SLIPPER

Mrs. O. L. Wolters, Tolland, Alta.

I have had a Yellow Lady's Slipper in my garden now for about four years. I wasn't able to find any growing around wild, but managed to get one from a nursery in Manitoba. I'm sure it had just one slipper the first year it bloomed. It was transplanted in the fall and bloomed in June. Next year it was the same, but last summer it had two slippers and a new stalk. This year I'm looking for more slippers.

I believe they must multiply by their bulbs and not very fast at that. Mine is planted in a shady spot with wild fern and wild blue violets. I would like to get another plant or two on a trade, but only for fall planting.