A Northern Nevada Homeowner’s Guide to Identifying and Managing Bur Buttercup

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Other common names: Curveseed butterwort, little bur, testiculate buttercup

Scientific name: *Ceratocephala testiculatus*

Family: Ranunculaceae

Description: A small, 2- to 5-inch tall plant that grows and flowers early in spring, bur buttercup produces stiff burrs that help spread this weed. It is toxic to livestock.

- **Leaves:** Grayish-green, hairy, and attached at the base of the plant. Leaf blades look like fingers.
- **Stems:** Short; extend outward from the base of the plant.
- **Flowers:** Small, yellow, with 2 to 5 petals. Blooms from late winter to early spring.
- **Fruit:** Forms many stiff, brown burrs. This is the point at which most people notice the plant.
- **Roots:** Short taproot.

Native to: Eurasia; naturalized throughout much of the western United States

Where it grows: Roadsides, vacant lots, in pavement cracks and other disturbed or unmanaged sites

Life cycle: Winter annual (sprouts in fall and early winter)

Reproduction: Reproduces by seed

Typical plant growing in disturbed site. (photo courtesy of Gary A. Monroe @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database)

Seedlings have divided leaves that look like fingers. (photo courtesy of Dr. Clinton C. Shock, Oregon State University)
**Control methods:** Bur buttercup should be controlled prior to seed formation. As this occurs very early in the spring, careful monitoring is needed to stop the spread of this weed.

**Mechanical:** Dig, hoe or pull young seedlings. Use mechanical control methods prior to formation of flowers and burrs.

**Cultural:** Thick mulches can help prevent seed germination. Plant desirable vegetation that will shade the area and reduce germination and growth of young plants.

**Biological:** None.

**Chemical:** Apply broadleaf-selective herbicides on young plants. Pre-emergence herbicides can be used to manage existing seed banks.

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**References:**


