

Tall Buttercup
Ranunculus acris

Currently in Montana, noxious weeds infest about 7.6 million acres (Montana's Noxious Weed Management Plan, 2008). Many of these state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction, 32 non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state noxious weed list.

Tall buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) is a Priority 2A listed noxious weed in the state of Montana. Priority 2A species are noxious weeds that are common in isolated areas within the state of Montana. Management for these species includes eradication or containment in areas where the population is less abundant. Management for these species is prioritized by local weed districts. Species listed as Priority 2A noxious weeds are: tansy ragwort, meadow hawkweed complex, orange hawkweed, tall buttercup, perennial pepperweed, yellowflag iris, blueweed, and hoary alyssum.

Tall buttercup is native to Europe and Eurasia. Common names include meadow buttercup, tall buttercup and giant buttercup. Tall buttercup produces fibrous, coarse spreading roots. The stem of tall buttercup can grow up to 3 ½ feet in height. The leaves are softly hairy and dark green in color and are produced both at the base of the plant and alternately all along the hairy stem. Leaves are 1-4 inches wide and are deeply lobed. The lobes are coarsely toothed and point out like fingers of a hand. The flowers of tall buttercup are about an inch wide and are found in clusters atop the long stems. Flowers have 5-7 petals that are yellow and glossy. Tall buttercup blooms from late May to September. These species reproduces by seeds, which are flat with an egg-shaped outline, dark brown in color, and are about 1/8" long. Seeds also have a slightly curved tip.

Tall buttercup is toxic to cattle, horses, sheep and goats. It contains oil that is bitter and causes irritation if ingested. This oil is called protoanemonin and if ingested, it can cause blistering and irritation of the skin and the lining of the mouth and digestive tract. The oil is released as animals graze on the fresh leaves and stems of tall buttercup. In severe causes of poisoning, irritation of the digestive tract can cause paralysis, convulsions and even death. Animals usually tend to avoid eating this plant due to its bitter taste. If dry tall buttercup material is consumed in hay, it is not harmful due to the fact that the toxic oil evaporates very quickly.

Tall buttercup can be controlled by various integrated weed management techniques such as hand pulling and herbicides. Often control measures are most successful by using a combination of control methods. Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds, if noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at (406) (Phone number). Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-3144.