

In April, it was all about henbit; now a new weed has caught the attention of homeowners. This particular weed has some similarities to henbit —yet many differences. The strongest similarity to henbit is it appears to be everywhere. I'd wager to say that for even those homeowners who care for their landscape with a fine-toothed comb, they, too, have this weed poking its nose where it's not wanted. The fact is this particular weed prefers moist soils to thrive. Needless to say, abundant moisture was and is something we've experienced in mid-Nebraska this spring; therefore, I'm guessing that is why this weed is so prolific.



Scientifically, it is called *Oxalis stricta*. For those gardeners not really into genus/species names, it might better be known as yellow wood sorrel. I've even heard of this weed called sheep sorrel, sour-grass, lemon clover, or toad sorrel.

Unlike henbit, yellow wood sorrel is a perennial weed not an annual. For some people, it's not even classified as a weed. Rather, it is viewed as a desirable plant. The reason: this plant is deemed edible by many. The leaves, flowers, and immature green seed pods are all edible. I've personally never eaten any portion of this plant, but from what I've read and heard about wood sorrel, it has a lemony taste. Perhaps that might be why it is sometimes called lemon clover. I've also heard that when one is out and about on a hot summer day, chewing on yellow wood sorrel leaves is thirst quenching. Wood sorrel is claimed to be high in ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and other nutrients. I do know for fact this plant is very high in potassium oxalate and oxalic acid and therefore should be used only in moderation.

In many ways, I do find this weed/plant to be rather attractive in spite of its bothersome nature. The leaves of yellow wood sorrel are divided into three

heart-shaped leaflets. Its leaves are most often green but may also appear reddish in color. We have both colors growing in our yard. I have discovered the reddish colored plants appear fewer in numbers. Often times Rita and I will allow the red ones to remain growing where found because we feel they are somewhat ornamental in appearance—probably a dumb move on our part. Whether green or red, each leaflet has a crease down the middle allowing the leaves to close at night or when under stress such as during a rainstorm or on a hot summer day. Together, the three leaflets give the leaf a clover shape— perhaps another reason for the common name lemon clover.

Wood sorrel starts blooming in mid-spring and continues to produce flowers through mid-fall. The yellow, star-shaped flowers are about a half-inch in diameter with five sepals and five symmetrical petals. They may occur singularly or in clusters of up to five flowers. The flowers, like the leaves, close at night. After a short time, the flower petals wither, and the ovary develops into an upright, ridged seed pod, about three-quarters of an inch in length with a short point at the top and five sepals at the base. Each seed pod is divided into five compartments, each of which may contain up to ten seeds. When the seed pods are dry, they burst open at the slightest touch, scattering seeds up to ten feet away. Perhaps this also explains why this particular weed is so prolific.

Rarely have I found this weed growing in our turfgrass. It seems to be most prevalent in our flower borders and particularly in those areas where it is shady and moist. Although control of this plant can be accomplished with herbicides such as 2-4D, control is best accomplished by hand weeding and mulching.

Yellow wood sorrel is the weed of the month for June; however, given more time, I'm reasonably sure a new one will undoubtedly take its place for the month of July. In the meantime, happy weeding.