Lesser Celandine, Pilewort

*Ranunculs ficaria* Ranunculaceae

**Botanical description:** A perennial plant. It has heart shaped leaves Yellow flowers and rhizomes.

**Part used:** Aerial parts

**Habitat, cultivation and harvesting:**  Native to Western Asia, North Africa and Europe. It forms thick mats and is found in woodlands, by roadsides and in open spaces. There is rarely a need to cultivate it. It can become an invasive weed in gardens.

**History/folklore/taste/energetics:** The rhizomes are slightly reminiscent of haemorrhoids or piles and this is held to be a Doctrine of Signatures indication of its value in treating these. In medieval times it was considered that piles could be cured by carrying the plant. Beggars used to rub the sap on their bodies to produce sores. Cathy Skipper made a flower essence from this with a class and it was for - nourishing new beginnings, stepping back into the light, renewal of energy and life force, period of gestation is over, reawakening, well earned life force available, light at the end of the tunnel ..

**Constituents:** Saponins, protoanemominin, anemomin, tannins, vitamin C

**Actions:** Astringent

**Traditional and current uses:**

Used externally in an ointment or in suppositories to treat piles.

Although now available as a tincture it was not traditionally used orally due to the toxicity of protoanemonin. However, this substance is destroyed by heat and some wild food foragers do use it as a cooked green vegetable. Some people also suggest cooking the rhizomes but they are very small. The leaves become more toxic as the flowers form so avoid using it once it is in flower.

The ointment has also been used to repair the perineum after childbirth but I would tend to use calendula or witch hazel for this. The sap of the plant can be irritating to the skin.