

Sulfur Cinquefoil



flower

stem

leaf

Sulfur Cinquefoil

Genus: *Potentilla*

Species: *recta*

Priority Listing: 2B

Perennial

Sulfur cinquefoil is native to the eastern Mediterranean region and can be found in grasslands, shrubby/forested areas, logged areas, roadsides, and other waste areas. This plant has a shallow branched and has woody root called a **caudex** that can grow up to 3' in length!

Sulfur cinquefoil can grow up to 2' tall and is sparsely covered with stiff hairs that jut outward from the stems, leafstalk, and flower stems at right angles. The leaves of this plant are **palmate** and have 5 to 7 toothed leaflets that are green in color on the underside; as opposed to grayish-green on the underside of native cinquefoils. Most of the leaves on this plant grow along the stem and decrease in both size and shape toward the top.

The flower of sulfur cinquefoil is light yellow in color and each flower has 5 petals that are deeply notched

at the tips. The center of the flower is also yellow. The seeds are brown to purple in color, comma shaped, and covered with net-like ridges.

There are several native species of cinquefoil that occur in Montana that can be confused with **invasive** sulfur cinquefoil.

There are three characteristics helpful in telling apart a native cinquefoil from **noxious** cinquefoil. The first characteristic is the **hirsute-hispid hairs** all over the stems, only sulfur cinquefoil has long, coarse hairs. Secondly, the seeds of sulfur cinquefoil are ridged whereas the seeds of other cinquefoils are smooth; thirdly, sulfur cinquefoil has more stem leaves than other cinquefoil species. Native Americans used this plant to treat wounds because its high **tannin** content makes tissues contract. The fruit of this plant is edible.



Photo courtesy of Matt Lavin, via Flickr

Caudex: short thick perennial stem that is underground or near ground level, often functions as water storage

Hirsute/Hispid Hair: long, rough, coarse hairs or bristles

Noxious: harmful or injurious to health or physical well-being

Palmate: leaf shape with several lobes (typically 5 to 7) whose midribs all radiate from one point

Perennial: a plant whose life spans several years

Rosette: circular clusters of leaves that radiate from a center of a plant, close to the ground, as in the dandelion

Tannin: yellowish or brownish bitter-tasting organic substance