



PHOTO: JOOST RIKSEN

SOLDIER IN LUMEN GARDEN

The Lumen nature garden has a ‘soldier’, a rare orchid. The *Orchis militaris* was discovered by nematologist Joost Riksen. The plant is barely 15 centimetres tall, which is small for this orchid. Ecologist Wieger Wamelink thinks this is due to the dry conditions. ‘There is much less growth than last year.’ It is difficult to know how the plant got onto campus. ‘It may have been among the seeds at the start,’ suggests Wamelink. But it could also have been blown in: orchid seeds are very fine and light and can travel great distances. ‘It just needs the right environment.’ Which Lumen offers. When the garden was laid out, the soil was made less fertile by excavating the top layer, and calcium-rich marl was brought from Limburg. You could say the garden is a piece of South Limburg. It is no coincidence that this is the only Dutch region where the military orchid is still found. This is the seventh different orchid species to be discovered in the garden. **IR** RK