

Flower hunting

In this series, student editor and Master's student of Plant Breeding Julia van der Westhuyzen (photos and text) and Professor of Plant Ecology Joop Schaminée (stories) go looking for the loveliest campus flora.

Kidney Vetch

Common name: Woundwort, or Kidney Vetch

Scientific name: *Anthyllis vulneraria*

Flowering time: June to September

Campus location: in the garden at Lumen

‘Both the scientific name and the common name of this plant suggest its healing properties – *vulneraria* means wound healer.

This is because the

leaves, roots and flowers

of the plant contain antibac-

terial and antioxidant properties,

so they can be used in both fresh and dried form to heal skin wounds and rashes.

‘Parts of this plant can also be taken internally to relieve stomach problems and throat pain.

The healing power of this plant is not limited

to human applications. The roots also have

a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing

bacteria. Through this relationship, nitrogen

can be absorbed and supplied to the plant itself

and the plants around it. The plant is also very

popular with bees, butterflies and caterpillars.’



Pretty but useless

‘Seeds from this plant are often included in packets of mixed seed. Such flower seed mixes seem like a nice idea but they contain mainly cultivated seeds from plant-breeding programmes, rather than indigenous varieties. So they do more harm than good because they do not provide food for insects and are of solely aesthetic value. They can also cross-pollinate with wild flower varieties and change the genetic properties of the wild variety.’ AS