

Flower hunting

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



Ragwort

Common name: ragwort

Scientific name: *Senecio jacobaea*

Flowering time: June to November

Where to find it on campus: next to Atlas

This bright yellow, sweet-scented flower is frequently found in Northern Europe. The common English name 'ragwort' describes its shabby, ragged leaves. The scientific name comes from the Latin word *senex*, which means old man. Joop Schaminée: 'This is because the flowers of species in the genus *Senecio* will all turn into a fluffy white *pappus*, similar to that of a dandelion. This bundle of fluffy white-crowned seeds resembles the face of a bearded old man, so the genus of plants producing this kind of pappus was named *Senecio*.'

The origin of its name '*kruiskruid*' in Dutch is the subject of debate... It either comes from the word for grey (*grijs* in Dutch) and therefore also describes the greyish white fluff, or from the word *kruis*, which means cross and describes the cross-like shape of the leaves. Saint Jacob's day is on 25 July, which is when these flowers are in full bloom – hence the name *jacobaea*.