

Flower hunting

In this series, student editor and MSc 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.



Himalayan blackberry

Common name: Himalayan blackberry

Scientific name: *Rubus armeniacus*

Flowering time: late summer to late autumn

Where to find it on campus: Next to the entrance to Gaia/Lumen

‘This blackberry is an exotic, invasive species that was brought to the Netherlands because of its large, sweet fruit. What seems like a single berry is in-fact a bunch of tiny berries. The plant grows into a natural hedge, inside which dead branches and leaves accumulate. A hedge like this is a serious danger during wildfires.

Apart from this exotic blackberry variety, there are around 200 *Rubus* varieties which are native to the Netherlands. Interestingly, only three of these reproduce sexually. The others are what is known as ‘apomictic’, which means the plant forms seeds without combining DNA from both parents. So the new plant is actually a clone of the mother plant.

For a more detailed look at all the species on offer in the Netherlands, explore the work of Wageningen’s Rense Haveman, whose PhD thesis *Concealed Diversity* is available from the Wageningen library (online). In his book, Haveman poses the philosophical question of what makes a species a species.’