

# 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.



## Musk mallow

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**Common name:** Musk mallow

**Scientific name:** *Malva moschata*

**Location on campus:** all around the botanical garden

**Flowering time:** July to September

There are five *Malva* species in the Netherlands, and one of them is the musk mallow, named for its pleasant musky fragrance. In the Netherlands, the musk mallow is often found in built-up areas – on road verges, for instance. An example of what we call an opportunistic species.

The musk mallow has many uses, from an ingredient in perfume to a garden cultivar to medicinal purposes. After flowering, the plant grows a fruit that looks just like a round, flat Emmental cheese. Hence the Dutch name *kaasjeskruid* (cheese herb). As a child in Limburg, my friends and I liked foraging for these fruits and eating them, although this species was rare back then. Another species, *Malva sylvestris*, did grow there. We weren't the only ones to have snacked on these plants. The story goes that Jesus was hungry once, but his mother, Mary, could not afford to buy bread. When the baker gave them free bread, Jesus told Mary to pick one of these plants and take it to the baker. Upon arrival, she found the fruit had turned into gold!