

Military orchid

Orchis militaris

DESCRIPTION

Grows up to 60cm tall and has 2 - 5 basal leaves which are bright green. There are further smaller leaves sheathing the stem. The inflorescence is cylindrical when the flowers are full open and typically carries between 2-25 flowers although more have been recorded. The common name of this orchid derives from the helmet-shaped hood formed by the upper petals and sepals.

HABITAT

Grows on alkaline substrates in meadows, in scrub and woodland edges.

DISTRIBUTION

Europe, Caucasus, Siberia, Asia Minor. Swedish islands in the Baltic Sea: Öland and Gotland. Single sites in northeast Skåne, Blekinge and Upland.



THREATS

The main threats to this plant are the afforestation of the grasslands, where it occurs, the overgrowth of trees and shrubs, and the drainage of wet meadows.

PROTECTION

CITES Washington Convention – Annex II
IUCN Red List of Threatened Species – Least Concern (Europe)
EU Wildlife Trade Regulation – Annex B
Red List status : Least Concern (Sweden).

Text: Marcin Klich
Photos: Marcin Klich