

Rare orchid is blooming in William's back garden

Report by **Jennifer Wiley**

NURSERY owner William Friend has discovered a lizard orchid – one of the rarest orchids in the country – growing in his garden.

The East Northdown Farm boss was amazed when the flower bloomed this spring, as the only nearby place lizard orchids can usually be found is Sandwich Bay.

Mr Friend said: "Three years ago I found a ring of leaves growing in my lawn, which looked like those of an orchid.

"I marked them with a stick to avoid them being mown or trodden on. This year it sent up a flower spike that turned out to be a lizard orchid. They are very rare and very beautiful."

The plant lover's garden was once a meadow, but has been a

FLOWER POWER

- Lizard orchids are listed as endangered by the World Conservation Union.
- More than 90 per cent of Britain's lizard orchids grow at Royal St George's Golf Club, near Sandwich.
- It is considered to be the country's biggest and most spectacular native orchid.

lawn for at least 100 years. Nonetheless, the orchid has grown through the grass to be 1ft tall, with pale green leaves and spiky flowers.

Mr Friend said: "I am always telling people to be very careful about applying fertiliser and weedkillers to their lawn as many are wonderful pieces of ancient chalk pasture with a variety of flowers."



Green fingers: William Friend with his rare bloom.