

# Rare plants in Straits area need protection

A more determined effort is needed to protect rare plants which grow on the Northern Peninsula.

That's the view of Dr. Wilf Nicholls, who says species of plants such as Long's Braya and Fernald's Braya, which grow on limestone barrens, don't grow anywhere else in the world.

He made the comment following an observation made recently in the Savage Cove area by a group of botanists and students who

study plants. They discovered that grading activity at the airstrip near the community had disturbed several of the plants.

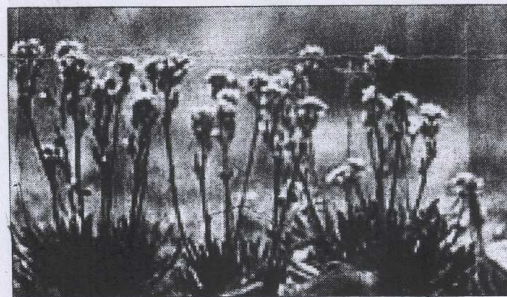
"We were upset for a while, but when we calmed down, we realized that more work needed to be done in preserving these plants for years to come," he said. "It's certainly not the end of the world, but it is a concern."

Members of the Braya Recovery Team, who meet at Flowers Cove every year

around June and July, are committed to ensuring that the plants aren't destroyed by man through activities such as quarrying or road-building. Dr. Nicholls says the team has a mandate to learn as much about the plants as possible.

The plant, which is a member of the mustard family, is classified as endangered. Long's Braya grows on the edge of frost boils at locations near Sandy Cove, Shoal Cove East, Savage Cove and Anchor Point. Fernald's Braya is found on limestone barrens between Port au Choix and Burnt Cape near Pistolet Bay.

Dr. Nicholls blames the disturbance of the plants on a lack of communication between botanists and



Long's Braya, a plant which is a member of the mustard family, is only found on the Northern Peninsula.

*(Photo reprinted from Environment Canada website)*

contractors in the area. However, he said some good may come out of it all.

"This (incident) has made people more aware of the

plants, which is a good thing," he stated. "This shows the need for the stewardship program we're going to be running on the Northern

Peninsula."

He added that there's a possibility the disturbance of the plant may result in the spread of seeds from the braya and the growth of more plants.

Dr. Nicholls, director of the Botanical Garden at Memorial University in St. John's, is hoping that people will come to understand why the plants are special and work with botanists to promote ecotourism in the area.

"We've got people rushing through the area, not knowing what kind of a resource is in the area," he said. "We should be trying to get people to look at the amazing biological diversity on the Northern Peninsula."

— By Allan Bock