

tions clearly influence where some take root. At the latitude of Nain there is a diversity of habitats: elevations from sea level to 1000 m, environments from tide-inundated coastlines to barren uplands, and an eclectic array of rocks. Certain plants have clearly found their niches within this varied geomorphic and geologic domain. For example, sandy beaches, are home to the beach sandwort (*Hockenya peploides*) and seaside potentilla (*Argentina anserina*). Well-drained shoreline and upland terraces provide ideal conditions for moss campion (*Silene acaulis*) and diapensia (*Diapensia lapponica*). Moist hillsides have colonies of common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), and more swampy regions have eye-catching carpets of fluffy cotton grass (*Eriophorum scheuchzeri*) and the less-obvious blacktop (*Bartsia alpina*). Mountaintops are generally devoid of significant plant communities, but local nooks and crannies below the peaks provide enough shelter for mounds of mountain avens (*Dryas integrifolia*) and solitary Arctic poppy (*Papaver radicum*). Nutrients offered by local rock substrate plainly dictate where some plants grow: bird's-eye primrose (*Primula mistassinica*) on mafic dykes but not on the adjacent granitic gneisses, woodsia ferns (*Woodsia alpina*) on residual soils from iron-rich diorite but not on adjacent anorthosite, and live-long saxifrage (*Saxifraga paniculata*) on calcareous rocks. Other plants, such as the Alpine rhododendron (*Rhododendron lapponicum*), locoweed (*Oxytropis campestris*), and bearberries (*Arctous alpina*) have more tolerance for differing physical and chemical attributes of the substrate, and are widely distributed.

Geology and geobotany: examples of the influence
of local conditions governing alpine plant habitats
in the Nain region of Labrador

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Alpine plants, strictly those that inhabit mountainous regions above the tree-line and below the snowline, are especially adapted to survive under extreme conditions that would destroy most perennials. These generally very-slow-growing, diminutive flora withstand long cold winters and short, occasionally hot, summers (a lot like St. John's!), low mean air temperatures, high light levels, and great fluctuations in diurnal conditions. Snow provides an insulating blanket from desiccating winter winds, and they are generally kept from baking even on the hottest summer days by cool breezes. Many of the common Alpine plants native to northern latitudes and high elevations can be found in Labrador, but local condi-