



Arctic flowers are vivid; the mountain avens is above left, the purple saxifrage below, and the Arctic poppy right.

fly up to pick them, they are likely to remain. But they too are slow growers; there are at least 834 different flowering plants and ferns in the Arctic and almost all are perennials because the summer is too short for the completion of a life-cycle. Most need many years to move from germination to first flowering. The Arctic has no climbing plants, it has none with spines or thorns and it has none that sting. The trees on the Arctic's southern edge grow so slowly that their growth rings can be seen only through a microscope.

Still, on a summer day one could be easily fooled even in the Arctic; in May or June the saxifrage appears on the hilltops, the Arctic poppy clings to gravelly soil, lichens and mosses cover the barren rocks and where bird droppings are plentiful (and nitrogen is therefore in abundance) there are often lush carpets of tiny flowers, as far as the eye can see.

[OIL AND OTHER RESOURCES]

Flying north from Yellowknife, one passes over endless patterns of free-form lakes, pale red in the sun, almost touching, separated by brown land bridges and capes. They represent nature as the abstract artist.

Across the surface are occasional shining straight lines, crossing at right angles, as if some precise child, equipped with a knife and ruler, had scratched a painting while it was still wet.

The lines, left behind by men carrying out seismic surveys, are significant; by reading between them, one can decipher much of what is happening to Canada's North—the search for oil and gas, the change in the ecology, and the activities of men and machines from the south. The lines are accidental—the men who drew them unintentionally formed permanent channels of new vegetation. The vegetation along the channels is fresh and green and caribou and other animals seek it out. Some people say the lines have produced a fortunate addition to the caribou's diet, but others say they disrupt the migration of the caribou herds as they move from bush to barren and back to bush, and this could have disastrous results.

One thing is certain—men from the south will continue to disturb the topography of the North. Richard M. Hill, manager of the Inuvik Research Laboratory, told an Arctic pipeline workshop at the University of Toronto that "it is impossible, and not necessarily desirable, to turn off industrial development. All energies should be directed toward improving the quality of the developments rather than eliminating them."

To measure developments one must understand the magnitude of the resources. Oil and natural gas potential in Canada's North is, at casual glance, enormous—perhaps more than five times as great as that of Alberta, the richest