

Editor

The "Northern News"

Ndola

Sir,

A recent statement by the Federal Broadcasting Corporation mentioning developments in the extraction of an essential oil from Nondi plant in the Abercorn District, is arousing interest.

Nindi is the native name of a small wild shrub with a blue flower which when distilled yields a golden-coloured oil with a pungent geranium flavour. Experiments have shown that the oil would have a ready market in the manufacture of soaps and perfumes if it could be produced in sufficient quantities.

The Northern Province Development Commission and the Agricultural Dept. of Northern Rhodesia are interesting themselves in its production and manufacture, but the pioneer work has been largely carried out over many years by Miss A. Hope Gamwell, who with her sister Miss A.M. Gamwell O.B.E. is one of the earliest settlers in the Abercorn area.

As long ago as 1930 Miss Gamwell saw possibilities in Nindi. She sent specimens of the plant and of the oil extracted from it to the Director of the Imperial Institute in London. The plant was named ~~Ausikwi~~ *Aeolanthus Gamwelliae* after her by the present Director of Kew Gardens and Miss Gamwell was encouraged to persevere with the work.

The oil was reported on favourably for toilet soap manufacture and Miss Gamwell set about increasing supplies.

The outbreak of war unfortunately interrupted this as both sisters served overseas for six years, and meantime the Nindi scheme had to be neglected.

However in 1946 the work was taken up again and this time Miss Gamwell succeeded in interesting another old settler, Mr J.H. Venning, an ex-Provincial Commissioner, in the venture.

Nindi formerly grew wild in several valleys between Abercorn and Mulungu, but bush fires have largely destroyed the shrub and the two collectors saw that the future of the infant industry lay in cultivation.

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Here is where the Northern Province Development Commission came into the picture. When told of the possibilities of Nindi as an essential oil industry, they asked how they could help. They found that progress was hampered by the slow growth of the plants and by the few persons interested in its cultivation.

A promise was given to help the scheme by research on more rapid methods of growth.

With that end in view Miss Gamwell and Mr Venning made over their supply of Nindi seedling and seeds for 1959 to the Agricultural Department so as to provide it with material.

It is hoped now that with more persons interested the plant may be a source of income to the Abercorn District, as its cultivation could also be undertaken by Africans.

The marketing of such supplies of oil as have hitherto been obtained has been disposed of through the Overseas Co-operative Federation Ltd. through the Abercorn Co-operative Society Ltd.

The market would appear to be assured. It is the oil that is at present in short supply.

H. Trant,

Mwanzo. P.O. Nakonde, N.R.

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