

# The spineflower city

## Scotts Valley wildflower may kill housing

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SCOTTS VALLEY — A rare pink wildflower found only in three Scotts Valley meadows could make large housing developments an endangered species here.

According to botanists, Hartweg's Spineflower grows only in north Scotts Valley, on dry meadowlands that make up 300 acres of the city's dwindling supply of undeveloped land. Two developers have proposed a total of 439 new homes and an 18-hole golf course for the area, which could push the flower to extinction, botanists say.

City officials have ordered the developers to come up with a plan to save the spineflower, possibly by deleting some homes from their building plans.

"We have issued instructions to the developers to address the issue of saving the rare flower in their environmental impact report," said Mayor Glennon Culwell. "I have personally requested a botanist's study for the report."

The developers were not available for comment Tuesday.

Scotts Valley may lose some new homes due to the discovery, but gain a namesake flower, according to City Councilman Michael Caffrey.

"We have the Ben Lomond Wallflower," said Caffrey. "Why not name this one ... after Scotts Valley?"

Wildflower specialist Randall Morgan discovered three distinct populations of the plant while collecting information for environmental reports on the two proposed developments.

The Polo Ranch subdivision proposes 163 homes on a 116-acre portion of the abandoned Santa's Village amusement park. The Glenwood Estates subdivision and golf course would put 276 homes and an 18-hole course on 271 acres west of Highway 17.

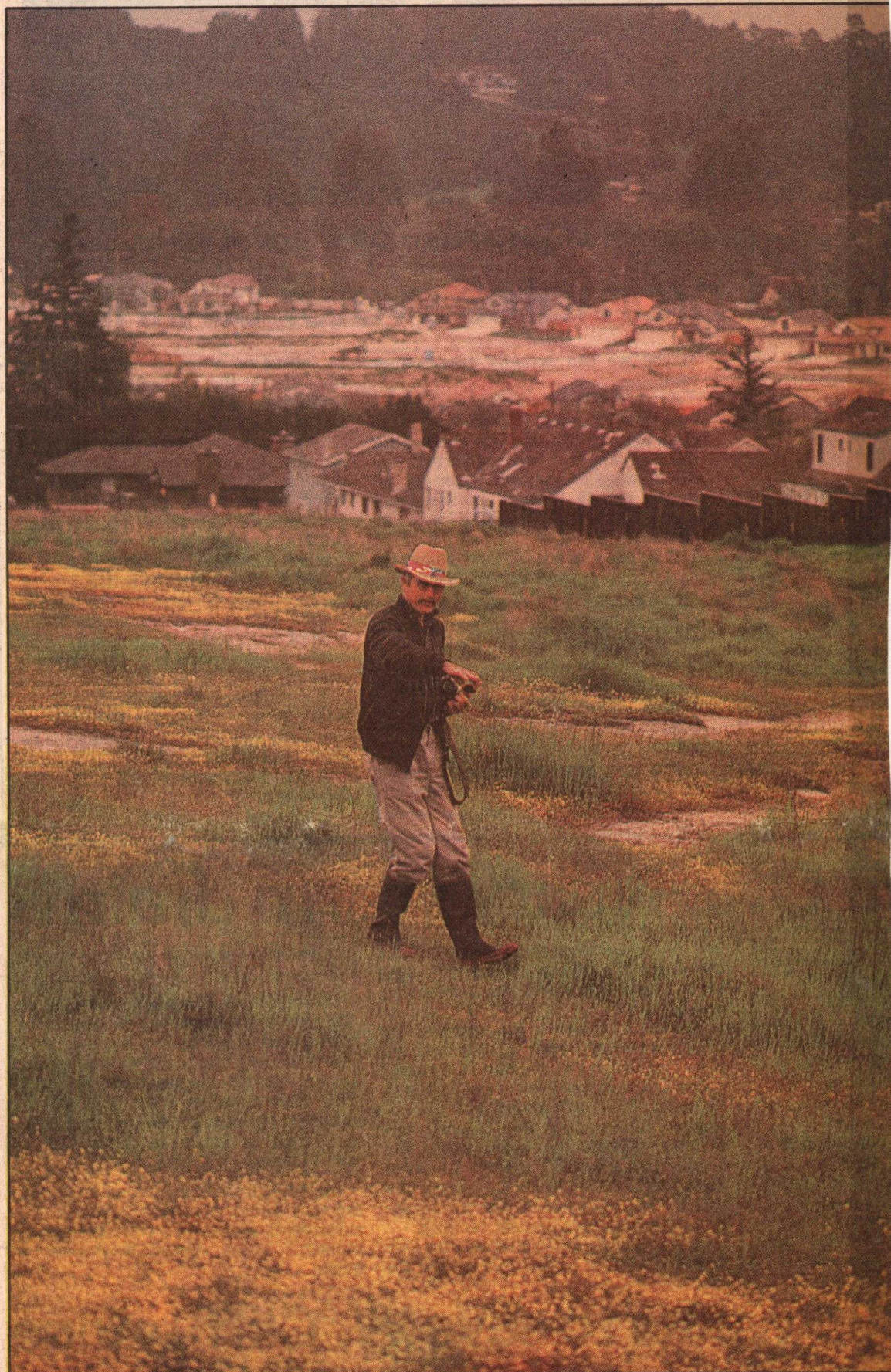
Morgan and other environmental activists objected to a draft environmental report on the Polo Ranch project presented to the City Council last week. Morgan claims there are several rare plants on the site not mentioned in the draft report.

City Council members unanimously asked for protection for the flower.

"I don't want to be party to the extinction of any species, plant or animal," Caffrey said.

Morgan's discovery is only the third time the flower, technically named *Chorizanthe robusta* var. *Hartwegii*, has been found by botanists. The plant was first

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel



Wildflower specialist Randall Morgan walks across a vacant parcel strewn with wildflowers in search of the rare Hartweg's Spineflower, shown at left. Morgan has discovered three distinct populations of the plant while collecting information for environmental reports on two proposed developments in Scotts Valley. His discovery marks only the third time the flower has been found.

REFERENCE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
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# Spineflower/ Botanist rediscovered plant

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discovered in 1846 by German horticulturist Karl Theodor Hartweg, who spent several years in California and Mexico collecting plants for the Royal Horticultural Society of London.

"Hartweg was an interesting character," said James Reveal, a professor of Botany at the University of Maryland. "The Royal Horticultural Society sent him to Mexico in 1845, then he came to California in 1846, and spent several years collecting, mainly

around Monterey."

Hartweg made two brief trips to Santa Cruz that year to see the redwoods and search for native flowers. In a "dry mountain pasture near Santa Cruz" he found colonies of delicate pink spineflowers, one of which he pressed and sent to London.

The flower was found again in 1882 by a U.S. government collector named Cyrus Guernsey Pringle, but that's where the botanical history of the plant ended. Reveal searched the Santa

Cruz mountains for the plant in 1988, but didn't find it.

But while Reveal was in London in 1989, working up a research paper on *Chorizanthe*, Morgan made his discovery. He sent a specimen of the plant to Reveal, who took it to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, compared it to Hartweg's original specimen and found a perfect match.

"It's a very rare plant," Reveal said in a telephone interview. "*Robusta* used to occur around the

San Francisco Bay region, but no more. It was once on the hills south of San Francisco where Daly City now sits."

The Scotts Valley variety has adapted itself to thrive in the thin layer of soil typical of the city's northern meadows. Colonies have been found on a 40-acre portion of the proposed golf course site and a three-acre portion of the Polo Ranch site. Another one-acre site has been identified north of Vine Hill School.