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Welcome to New Zealand's Plant Portal. Wally Richards Weekly Garden Tips & Advice.

Gardening Articles for week ending  
**8th March 2008**

Written by Wally Richards. Sorry about the photo

## STRAWBERRIES

It is March already, first month of autumn and only 4 weeks till daylight savings ends.

Daylight savings gives us a perception that the days are still long, with a good amount of time in the early evening to do a few jobs outside as well as water. We run by the clock on the wall or our wrist, while plants run to the universal clock of the sun. They (the plants) have been watching the days shorten and they know that winter is looming. Strawberries are right on the button with the seasonal change and have for a few weeks now, been producing runners which create new strawberry plants.

Strawberries have the ability to reproduce in three ways, seeds on their outer skins, runners in autumn and by clumping. A few newer gardeners have asked me recently what to do with the runners on their strawberry plants. It all depends on whether you would like some new young plants for your own use or to give to a friend. If this is the case then all you need to do is ensure that the runners move over the soil so the young plants formed at the nodules can root into the soil. You leave them attached to the parent plant till about May and then you can cut the runner and lift the new plants for re-planting. If you do not want any new plants for yourself or friends then the best thing to do is cut off the runners as they appear and keep all the energy in the parent plant.

Either way, to promote healthy plants, new or old, a 2 weekly spray of Mycorrcin should be applied to both. Mycorrcin is magic on strawberries and with its use can increase your crop by 200 to 400% as well as assisting in keeping the plants healthy. A healthy bed of strawberries can produce well for several years till the clumps get too big and production falls. On some varieties of strawberries you will find a late crop of flowers and berries, on others they will be finished fruiting for the season.

## THE FATHER OF FERTILISER

Likely you have never heard the name Justus von Liebig, in fact it was only in the beginning weeks of 2008 that this name was mentioned to me. Here is what Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia has to say:

(Reference at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justus\\_von\\_Liebig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justus_von_Liebig))

"Justus von Liebig (May 12, 1803 April 18, 1873) was a German chemist who made major contributions to agricultural and biological chemistry, and worked on the organization of organic chemistry. As a professor, he devised the modern laboratory-oriented teaching method, and for such innovations, he is regarded as one of the greatest chemistry teachers of all time. He is known as the "father of the fertilizer industry" for his discovery of nitrogen as an essential plant nutrient, and his formulation of the Law of the Minimum which described the effect of individual nutrients on crops. He also developed a manufacturing process for beef extract, and founded a company, Liebig Extract of Meat Company, that later trademarked the Oxo brand beef bouillon cube. One of his most recognized and far-reaching accomplishments was the invention of nitrogen-based fertilizer. Liebig believed that nitrogen must be supplied to plant roots in the form of ammonia.

Though a practical and commercial failure, his invention of fertilizer recognized the possibility of substituting chemical fertilizers for natural (animal dung, etc.) ones. He also formulated the Law of the Minimum, stating that a plant's development is limited by the one essential mineral that is in the relatively shortest supply, visualized as "Liebig's barrel". This concept is a qualitative version of the principles used to determine the application of fertilizer in modern agriculture."

So back in the 1800's this remarkable man worked on establishing what was to become known as NPK fertilisers. The ability to bypass the natural way plants feed by applying chemical elements directly to the root zone. This was a great turn of events and soon fertiliser companies were established to produce man made fertilisers. Farmers and orchardists swapped their old natural ways of growing for the new chemical way. Plants grew quicker without so much manual work, fertiliser companies became rich, universities studied and refined the process. Man had discovered a way to beat nature and bend the creator's work to his will.

But here is a little secret that the fertiliser companies and their consultants don't want you to know:

Later in life, Justus Von Liebig came to the realisation that his work with NPK fertilisers was incorrect.

>>>>> CONTINUED >>>>>

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From reference:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/london/permaculture/permaculture-list-archives-1999-2002/msg03631.html>

In 1855, Justus Von Liebig wrote:

"Unfortunately the true beauty of agriculture with its intellectual and animating principles is almost unrecognized. The art of agriculture will be lost when ignorant, unscientific and short sighted teachers persuade the farmer to put all his hopes in universal remedies, which don't exist in nature. Following their advice, bedazzled by an ephemeral success, the farmer will forget the soil and lose sight of his inherent values and their influence."

So here is the famous admission from Liebig--- that he had spent his professional life with a lying basis--- that has been the false foundation of practically all the university type researches (catering to the chemical companies) that so fondly embrace the lies about ion absorption by plant roots:

Justus Von Liebig wrote in 1855: "I had sinned against the wisdom of our creator, and received just punishment for it. I wanted to improve his handiwork, and in my blindness, I believed that in this wonderful chain of laws, which ties life to the surface of the earth and always keeps it rejuvenated, there might be a link missing that had to be replaced by me--this weak, powerless nothing.

The law, to which my research on the topsoil led me, states, 'On the outer crust of the earth, under the influence of the sun, organic life shall develop'. and so, the great master and builder gave the fragments of the earth the ability to attract and hold all these elements necessary to feed plants and further serve animals, like a magnet attracts and holds iron particles, so as no piece be lost. Our master enclosed a second law unto this one, through which the plant bearing earth becomes an enormous cleansing apparatus for the water. Through this particular ability, the earth removes from the water all substances harmful to humans and animals--all products of decay and putrefaction, of perished plant and animal generations. The opinion, that plants draw their food from a solution that is formed in the soil through rainwater, was everyone's belief. It was engraved into my mind. This opinion was wrong and the source of my foolish behaviour.

After I learned the reason why my fertilizers weren't effective in the proper way, I was like a person that received a new life. For along with that, all processes of tillage were now explained as to their natural laws. Now that this principle is known and clear to all eyes, the only thing that remains is the astonishment of why it hadn't been discovered a long time ago. The human spirit, however, is a strange thing. Whatever doesn't fit into the given circle of thinking; doesn't exist."

Well there you have it gardeners, from the horses mouth so to speak, the father of fertilisers came to realise his system was not sustainable, it destroyed the natural order of things, killed the soil life, made for unhealthy plants, animals and us at the end of the food chain. It took nature millions of years to create the biology of soil/plant relationship and it only took us a fraction of that time to destroy it.

Once when a cow pooped on a paddock it was considered an asset. The soil life converted the poo to food to feed the

grasses and to re-feed the cow. Now with the soil life gone that poo is a pollutant and along with nitrates/super phosphate etc harm our water ways and oceans. (plus our health)

Mind you there is a lot of money to be made out of man made fertilisers. (who cares about the planet?)

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