

Midnight Sun Plant Food

Faro

Started: First sales in 1994

Contact: Hubert (Herbie) Croteau

Midnight Sun Plant Food manufactures a plant food supplement for plants and gardens and is currently developing a product to help lawn growth. The main force behind this family business is Herbie Croteau. Until her death in June 1999, friend Joan McCurry was Vice President and 49% shareholder in the business.



Getting started: Joan, Herbie's co-worker at the Faro mine, suggested starting a business that involved plants since every home has some. Herbie began working on a plant food formula from scratch with only a brief look at similar products to guide him. The final formula was tested to determine its chemical composition and then approved under the Yukon's Food Administration Act. The first sales were in March 1994 at the Whitehorse trade show.

Key to success: The growth and improvement in plants is easy to see and no customer has made use of Midnight Sun's "100% satisfaction or your money back" guarantee. Herbie has traveled throughout the Yukon, northern BC and Alberta to get the product on the shelf. Supportive people in Faro have offered free services and labour to help this new business.

Lessons learned: Getting financing was very difficult. However, the Department of Economic Development eventually gave a small loan and Dana Naye Ventures and the Business Development Corporation provided additional financing after Herbie and his son took a business planning course. Midnight Sun has not been able to do any paid advertising but CBC Venture, Country Canada and Northbeat all aired TV stories on the business this fall.

Future of business: Midnight Sun recently signed a contract to sell 216 cases of plant food to the Canadian chain, Home Hardware. Additional large orders are anticipated. Plans are in the works to improve the bottling system.