

Potash is an important ingredient in mineral, animal, and vegetable productions, and especially in the last.

Sodium greatly resembles potassium in its properties, though it is less fusible, and has not so strong an affinity for oxygen. Soda is an oxide of sodium. Common salt, which occurs as a mineral, and is a principal ingredient in seawater and in many springs, is a chloride of sodium, though this substance is never quite pure; it is commonly united with small quantities of the sulphate of magnesia and lime, and the chloride of magnesium.

Lithium is the metallic base of lithia, a substance found in a mineral called petalite by M. Arfwedsen, and since found in spodumene, lepidolite, and other minerals. Lithium is a white-coloured metal, and has a great affinity for oxygen. We are indebted to Davy for the knowledge of lithium, potassium, and sodium, all of which were detected by the application of voltaic electricity to their several oxides.

Calcium is the base of lime, and is a white metal of great brilliance. Lime is one of the most abundant principles in nature; many of the largest mineral masses are entirely composed of this earth. It also enters into the composition of animal bones, and is found in nearly all collections of water and in springs.

Magnesium resembles calcium in its properties, and is the base of magnesia. This metal has the colour of silver, and a metallic lustre. Magnesia occurs abundantly in nature, but it does not, like lime, constitute large masses; though blended with other compounds, it is frequently present in rocks, and is always found in animal bodies.

Strontium, the base of strontian, is a heavy metal, and not abundant in nature. Barium is a dark gray-coloured metal, that has a strong attraction for oxygen, and is the base of barytes.

Aluminium is a most important principle, and, although it is never found pure, it constitutes, when combined with oxygen, one of the most extensively distributed mineral substances. Aluminium is the base of alum, clay, and other mineral compounds, but does not seem to form any part of organized beings.

Glucinium, yttrium, zirconium, and thorium, are metallic principles discovered by the analysis of some rare minerals. They appear to exist in very small quantities, and it is therefore only necessary that their names should be mentioned