

Welcome to Worm Composting!

- Vermicompost is the term for the rich, crumbly, black compost created when earthworms eat their way through a pile of organic matter.
- Red worms are placed into a bin with moist shredded newspaper and peat moss.
- Food scraps like apple cores, vegetable peelings and coffee grounds are buried in the bedding.

Red Wigglers

- Worm composting is done by red worms or red wigglers.
- They thrive on food scraps.
- Red worms are smaller than common earth worms, and prefer a dark, warm, and very moist environment.
- They work best at room temperature.
- They are voracious eaters, eating half their body weight each day.

Worms in My House?

- The worms do not smell and will not try to escape from the bin. It is, however, very important to maintain the bin properly.

Bedding

- Proper bedding for the worms is very important. It gives them a damp place to live, a balanced diet and prevents odor.
- Shredded newspaper and garden soil with no chemicals works best.
- Sprinkle the bedding with water until it's as wet as a wrung out sponge (70% moisture).
- Clean bedding is where they will lay their cocoons (5 eggs per cocoon).

Feeding the Worms

- Worms are fed by burying food scraps in the bedding.
- Always cover the scraps well with the bedding to discourage odors and fruit flies.
- The smaller you cut up the food scraps the faster they will disappear. (Worms have no teeth.)
- When you set up your bin, start feeding slowly.
- Happy worms eat half their body weight in food scraps each day.
- Putting in more food than the worms can eat might lead to infestations of other pests in the bin. It can also increase the acidity and make the bin smell unpleasant. Over time you will get to know how much food your worms can take at once.

Conditions in the Bin

- Protect the worms from extremes in temperatures. Their ideal temperature range is 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit or 15-21 degrees Celsius.
- Add crushed eggshells, a pinch of powdered limestone or rock dust to reduce acidity and provide grit. Worms have gizzards and need the grit to help digest the food scraps.
- A healthy worm population will double every sixty days.
- There is no such thing as too many worms in a worm bin. The worm population will expand to meet the available food source.
- If you have a healthy worm population you can start new bins for friends.

Red Wigglers Like

* Coffee grounds * Coffee filters * Fruit scraps * Vegetable scraps * Tea bags * Grains *

Don't Put These Things in the Bin

* Cat or dog feces * Oily Foods * Cheese and dairy foods * Spicy foods * Too much citrus *

Remember

- Your worm bin is a living environment that can be shared by many small creatures besides red worms. Many of these creatures are actually quite beneficial. They are rarely a problem.
- Fruit flies are tiny creatures that are annoying but harmless. Keeping food buried under a layer of newspaper (dirt is even better) will help discourage flies.
- Freezing the food scraps over night will also alleviate the problem of fruit flies.

Harvesting and Using Vermicompost

- Once your bin starts to get full of castings, begin feeding food scraps in one side of the bin only. This will draw the worms to that side of the bin. You can then scoop off the vermicompost from the other side of the bin.
- The vermicompost is great nourishment for plants when mixed into flower beds and vegetable gardens.

Easy Container Example (plastic bin or old ice chest)

- Surface area should equal two square feet per family member.
- Depth of 12 inches (six inches for bedding/six inches for worms and food).
- Provide some air but keep a lid on it!

