

Welcome to Worm Composting!

It is so simple! 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. The worms eat the scraps and produce a great compost that can be used to enrich the soil of your house plants, gardens and flower beds. Vermicompost is the term for the rich, crumbly, black, compost that is created when earthworms eat their way through a pile of organic matter.

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 problems. 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.

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. When you set up your bin, start feeding slowly. (Remember: Worms eat half their body weight in food scraps each day. So if you have 0.5 kilograms of worms, you can feed about 0.5 kilograms of food every two days.) 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 or a pinch of powdered limestone or rock dust to reduce acidity. Add a small amount of garden soil to provide grit. Worms have gizzards and need the grit to help digest the food scraps. Some people say that 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

* Animal Products or Wastes * Oily Foods * Cheese and dairy foods * Butter * 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. Reducing the acidity of your bin and keeping food buried under a layer of newspaper will help discourage them. 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.

Container Examples

Surface area should equal two square feet per family member. Depth of 12 inches (six inches for worms/six inches for bedding).