



SWaste Reduction

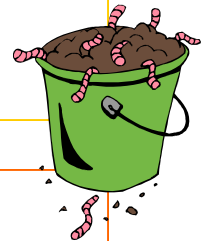
VERMICOMPOSTING a.k.a. WORMS!



Backyard Composting vs. Worm Composting

This is strictly a personal preference, neither is better or worse. Like anything else, there are pros and cons to each method. The benefits of worm composting over backyard composting are:

- Worm composting is faster and can work year-round with no changes in method.
- Some consider worm castings (another name for the compost they create) to be even more fertile than typical backyard compost.
- Worm bins can be kept in very small spaces indoors, so people without yards can do it - it is great for apartment/condo dwellers and classrooms!
- Compost tea (the liquid produced during the process) is easy to "harvest" from most worm bins and can be used on houseplants & gardens as a fertilizer.
- Kids love it!
- They are the easiest pets to care for - you can go on vacation for two weeks without getting a "worm sitter!"
- Many people concerned about pests getting into their outdoor bin like keeping the indoor worm bin.
- There is less maintenance involved - no mixing needed!



Not just any worm can do the job!!



Although most species of worms will break down organics to some degree, **red wigglers** (a.k.a. red worms or *Eisenia fetida*) are the best for processing large amounts of organics. They also reproduce quickly and are tough enough to survive minor temperature fluctuations.

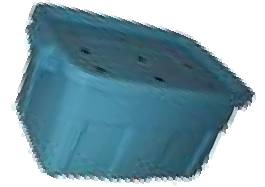
Unlike many other species, red worms thrive in the confinement of a composting bin. They require a moist, dark, well-drained and well-aerated environment.

The High Country Conservation Center is your local worm farmer! We offer great advice, hands-on workshops, and affordable prices. (See other side for contact information)

Making It Happen

1. Set up a bin

- There are many commercial worm bins available - visit www.composters.com for ideas.
- Make your own out of wood or plastic. The bin should be 12" to 15" tall (5 and 10 gallon bins work fine) and have a lid. The size depends on the size of your household and how much food waste you produce - the average two-person household needs a bin that is about 2x2x2 feet. A great option is to drill holes into a lidded plastic bin (like a Rubbermaid container).
- Holes in the bin should be 1/4" -1/2" in diameter. Do not place holes below the top 2" of the bin (unless you want drain holes in the bottom of your bin).



2. Get bedding ready

- Bedding can be made from shredded newspaper, paper towels, or dead leaves.
- Wet the bedding so that it is as wet as a wrung out sponge. A spray bottle works great for this.
- Fill the bin with the bedding keeping it a few inches short of the top.

3. Add your worms!

4. Add some food!

- Kitchen scraps (no meat, bones or dairy please!) are a worm favorite. Don't over feed - start slow with about a cup or two a week and then build from there.



5. Harvest your castings!

- After about 3 to 5 months your bin will be full of harvestable worm castings.
- Don't feed your worms for 2 weeks or so, then fill an old mesh bag (onion bags, etc) with kitchen scraps and bury into the castings and bedding in the bin. In a few days most of the worms will have made their way into the bag. Remove it momentarily as you empty out the castings from the bin.

6. Start the process outlined above all over and empty the mesh bag's contents into the bin at step 3.

Troubleshooting

DO Feed Your Worms

vegetable scraps
coffee grounds and filters
tea bags and filters
fruit peels or pulp
paper products (paper plates, towels, cardboard...)

DO NOT Feed Your Worms

meat
fish
dairy products
greasy or oily foods
pet wastes
cooked foods with oil, butter...



Odor - To avoid unpleasant odors...

- Add only enough food that the worms can eat in a few days
- Maintain air spaces in the bedding
- Keep bedding moist but not wet
- Add only food items listed above

Fruit flies -To discourage fruit flies...

- Bury the food waste in the bedding (keep bin full of bedding materials - worms will continuously eat the bedding)
- Limit the amount of banana peels & citrus (try zapping these items in the microwave or boiling them in hot water to kill fruit fly eggs)

Too hot or too cold - Try to maintain bin between 55 and 77 degrees to keep worms happy and alive.

Learn more

We sell worms! Get your red wigglers from the experts. We'll help you set up a bin and get you started right away. Vermicomposting Handouts and Hands-on Workshops are also available at the High Country Conservation Center - www.highcountryconservation.org.

Worms Eat My Garbage - Mary Appelhof's book on worm composting - the worm composters bible!



High Country Conservation Center
Give us a call for assistance!
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