



How to Compost with Worms

Composting with worms is a fun and easy way to recycle food scraps and other organic material into a valuable soil amendment called worm castings. Worms eat the food scraps, but only ingest some of the nutrients, the rest is deposited into the worm castings.

Step 1: Making or Buying a Worm Bin

Building a worm bin is very simple and inexpensive. A 10-gallon plastic bin is a good size to start out with. Drill small holes along the bottom & top of all four sides, and a few on the top and bottom of the bin. This will allow oxygen to distribute through the bin. Worm bins can also be made out of wood or glass containers.



There are many different worm compost bins available for purchase.



Step 2: Add Bedding

There are many different materials you can use as bedding for your worms. Eventually the worms will eat the bedding and convert it into castings. Damp shredded newspaper and coconut coir work great as bedding. Simply fill your bin halfway with one or both of these items. Add a cup or two of soil to the bedding since worms need grit to digest.



Step 3: Buy Worms!

Red Wigglers are the best worms for composting. One pound of red wigglers will eat about 1.5-2.0 lbs of food scraps a week!



Visit <http://www.angoraandworms.com> to purchase worms from The Worm Ladies of Charlestown

TURN OVER

Step 4: Add Food Scraps

There are many different types of fresh food scraps you can give to your worms. Except for a lot of citrus worms will eat all kinds of fresh fruit and vegetable scraps. The smaller you cut, chop or shred the items fed to your worms, the quicker you will have worm castings! You can also feed your worms pet hair, coffee grinds with filter, tea bags and egg shells. Cover up food scraps with some of the bedding that is in the bin. Do not feed anything with oil to your worms.



Step 4: Monitoring Moisture

The worms need to live in a moist environment in order to survive. It's a good idea to keep a spray bottle next to your bin. You may find that your worm bin gets too wet. If this is the case simply add more shredded newspaper to reabsorb the moisture. You can also try to drain the liquid out in to a container and then dilute the liquid with water. This mixture is commonly known as worm tea and can be used to water your plants.



Step 4: Harvesting the Castings

It will take about 3-5 months for the worms to convert a good amount of food scraps to castings. There are many ways to harvest your castings from your worms. One way is to dump the contents of your bin on to a tarp and handpick the worms from the castings. Keep your worms out of the sun or light as they will become paralyzed and die. Another way to harvest castings is by moving all the bedding over to one side of the worm bin. Add new, dampened bedding to the empty side, and start placing food scraps on that side. Over about a one-month period, most of the worms should move over to the new bedding, allowing you to scoop out the relatively worm-free compost. Finished worm compost starts becoming toxic to the worms if it's left in the worm bin for too long.



Step 4: Using Worm Castings

You can use castings immediately, or you can store it and use it throughout the year. Castings can be directly mixed with your potting soil, compost or garden soil as a soil amendment, which helps make nutrients available to plants. Or the castings can be used as a top dressing for your indoor or outdoor plants.



**THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND**

For More Information:

Visit the Master Composter & Recycler webpage:

<http://www.uri.edu/cels/ceoc/index.html>

Or contact Sejal Lanterman at 401-874-4453 or
Sejal@uri.edu

