

Vermicomposting Guide

Getting started at home



Composting in a worm bin is ideal in places where outdoor composters aren't feasible. You can set up your own vermicomposter using readily available materials. Nutrient-rich compost will be ready to harvest after only a few weeks.

Worm Facts

- Worms have no bones, eyes or ears.
- Every worm has five hearts.
- Worms are cold-blooded; their temperature is dictated by their surroundings.
- Worms can eat their weight each day.
- Worms can live up to 10 years.
- Worms breathe through the skin; if it dries out they will die.
- Worms break down organic matter & provide a rich source of nutrients for plants.

What You'll Need

- A 12-gallon opaque container with a lid (a medium-sized plastic bin works well)
- Dry bedding material (e.g. shredded newspaper)
- 2–3 cups of organic soil or finished compost (regular soil or potting mix works)
- Spray bottle with water
- Long-handled spoon or fork to move around the food and compost
- ½–1 lb worms

Where to buy worms? The best worms for composting are red wigglers, available through a number of local online retailers.

Setting up Your Worm Bin

1. Ensure good air flow – Drill ten to fifteen $\frac{3}{16}$ " holes in the top of your bin.
2. Bedding – Start with a layer of dry shredded newspaper to create a layer that is at least 2–5 inches thick (enough to completely cover the worms and the food).
4. Mix – Add water and mix contents until bedding is the consistency of a wet sponge.
5. Add worms – Add the worms and sprinkle the soil on top. A small amount of soil will help the worms digest more easily.
6. Set-up – Store your worm bin in a cool (not cold), preferably dark place, such as under the sink.
7. Say goodnight! – Allow the worms to settle into the bedding overnight.
8. Feeding time – Start feeding the next day. In general, worms can consume up to ½ their weight each day, but this can vary widely depending on their diet and environment. Don't overfeed the worms – wait until the food from the previous feeding is almost gone before adding more.



Tips and Tricks

- It's best to feed the worms 1–2 times per week rather than daily; Too much uneaten food can attract fruit flies.
- Bury food in a different spot each time, making sure to cover the food with bedding. Sprinkle a handful of crushed eggshells on top of bedding about once a week to counter the acidity in food scraps.
- Add additional dry bedding materials when it is difficult to bury food scraps.
- Composting will be faster if the organic material is chopped into small pieces.
- Freezing food will break the cell walls, speeding up decomposition. Allow frozen food to reach room temperature before feeding to the worms.
- Keep the contents of the bin moist by spraying with water. Watering frequency will depend on the temperature/humidity of the surroundings. Worm bin contents should be moist (but not soaking) at all times.

Feed	Do Not Feed
Fruits and veggies (no citrus)	Meat
Tea bags (no strings)	Dairy
Cooked pasta / grains (no	Oil
Leaves / grass clippings	Bones
Crushed eggshells	Spices
Egg cartons / brown paper tow-	Vinegar
Plant cuttings	Sauces
Beans and legumes	Pet Waste

The Harvest!

The “Dump and Sort” Method Under bright lighting, empty bin contents onto a flat surface. Separate into piles and wait 10–15 minutes for the worms to move to the bottom. Remove the top portion of each pile. Repeat this process until only the worms remain. Add the worms to fresh bedding to resume vermi-composting.

The “Side to Side” Method Feed the worms on one side of the bin for a number of weeks, forcing them to move to that side of the bin. Once the worms have moved over to the food source, remove the castings from the vacated side. Replace the castings with fresh bedding. Wait a week or two, then repeat the process on the opposite side.



Happy composting!

This resource was adapted from Evergreen's "Vermicomposting for Beginners."

