



# COMPOSTING WORM BIN



Worm bins are an excellent way to supplement your outdoor composting system. You can create your very own worm composting bin using storage containers that can be kept in your home or apartment. Worm compost is higher in nutrient value than regular garden compost.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Opaque storage container with lid- Rubbermaid works great! (Bins can range from a small shoebox sized container to a large container. When choosing the size of bin consider where the worm bin will be located within your house and how much food scraps you will feed it)
- Second lid or tray (to be used under the worm bin for collecting compost tea)
- Drill
- 1/4" drill bit
- 1/8" drill bit
- Red Wiggler worms
- Newspaper
- Cardboard
- Food scraps for feeding worms
- Spray bottle
- 4 "feet" for your worm bin (wooden blocks, bottle tops, cans, etc.)

## STEPS

### STEP 1: MAKE DRAINAGE HOLES.

Using a 1/8" drill bit, drill several holes in the bottom of your worm bin to allow for drainage. Holes should be about 1"-2" apart. The brown liquid that will drain out can be used to make compost tea. Your worms will not escape (unless the worm bin is significantly too dry or too wet) because worms prefer dark, moist places.

### STEP 2: ATTACH FEET

### STEP 3: MAKE VENTILATION HOLES

### STEP 4: PREPARE BEDDING

Soak 1" strips of newspaper for a minute. Squeeze excess water so that the newspaper is damp, but not soggy. Fluff up the paper so that there is air and place into worm bin. Fill half of your worm bin with bedding material. You can also use shredded cardboard. Do not use anything with a glossy finish.

### STEP 5: ADD WORMS!

Red Wigglers, *Eisenia foetida*, also known as 'red worms' or 'manure worms,' should be used in worm bins as they are the best at composting organic matter. Red wigglers can eat up to their own weight of organic matter each day! Unlike night crawlers, red wigglers do not need a lot of space to burrow. For a 12-gallon worm bin, you will need one pound of worms (which is about 1,000 worms).

Red wigglers can be easily ordered online, though if you know someone with a worm bin, you can take a scoop of worms and compost from their worm bin to start your own. Worms self-regulate, so there is no need to worry that your worms will over multiply.

## STEP 6: FEED YOUR WORMS.

Worms will eat organic matter such as vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags (be sure to remove metal staple from tag), eggshells, and paper (non-glossy). Worms will eat plant matter such as leaves (green and brown) & weeds. Some people choose to cut their food scraps into tiny pieces or puree them. This will allow the worms to compost faster, but is not a necessary step. A 12-gallon bin will be able to compost 1 lb. of food a day. Mold in your worm bin is natural and will help the worms break down the organic matter.

Worms should not be fed citrus fruits, as they contain d-limonene which can be toxic to worms. Do not feed your worms meat, dairy, or oily foods. While worms can technically eat these foods, they take a very long time to decompose and will create strong, unpleasant odors.

When feeding your worms, bury the food scraps at least an inch deep to prevent odor. Bury food scraps in different spots so that if worms do not like a particular food they are able to get away from it. You may feed your worms again once they have finished their previous food scraps; waiting to feed them will prevent your worm bin from smelling.

## STEP 7: FIND A PLACE FOR YOUR BIN TO LIVE

Make sure the spot where you place your worm bin has good ventilation and is easily accessible. The ideal temperature for worms is between 55° - 77°. Do not place your worm bin in direct sunlight. Place your bin on top of your compost tea tray.

## DO NOT FEED YOUR WORMS:

### DAIRY PRODUCTS



### OIL & SALAD DRESSING



### ONIONS & GARLIC



### CITRUS FRUITS



### MEAT PRODUCTS



### PLASTIC, METAL, & GLASS



## MONITORING YOUR WORM BIN:

### MOISTURE

The contents of your worm bin, including bedding, should be moist. Worms' bodies consist of 75% - 90% water. If you find that your worm bin is too dry, use a spray bottle for misting the worm bin. If you find that your worm bin is too wet, add paper. This can be any type of paper as long as it is not glossy.

### SMELL

Your worm bin should not be smelly; a smelly bin indicates that there are too many food scraps. Stop adding food scraps to the bin and allow worms to catch up and increase air flow to the bin by turning over compost gently or adding more air holes to the lid and sides of the bin.

### FRUIT FLIES

Fruit flies should not be an issue if you bury food scraps under the bedding or soil.

### WORMS ESCAPING

Check moisture level of worm bin. If the compost bin is extremely dry or extremely wet the worms will try to escape due to unlivable conditions within the bin.

### COMPOST TEA TRAY

Once the tray under the worm bin accumulates a bit of brown liquid, you can use in conjunction with water as compost tea for your garden.

### HARVESTING

Harvest worm castings once all the bedding is gone and your worm bin smells like healthy, earthy compost. Compost will be ready in 3-6 months. To harvest your bin, dump the finished compost with worms onto a tarp and create a mound. Leave the mound for a few minutes to allow worms to burrow down into the center to escape light. Sift through the mound and collect the compost, until all you have left are the worms.