

FAQs about Worms

Can worms see? No, earthworms don't have eyes. However, they have a light sensor and will hide from bright light.

How does the worm eat? Earthworms have no teeth for chewing food. They grind their food in their gizzard by muscle action. Earthworms take only small particles into their mouth and mix it with some grinding material such as sand, topsoil or limestone, which are also ingested. The contractions from the muscles of the gizzard compress those particles against each other, mix it with fluid and grind it into smaller pieces. Be sure to add a little garden soil, sand, or topsoil in the earthworm bedding.



Where is the worm's mouth?

The earthworm's mouth is in the front segment.

Web sites

<http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/waste/composting.html>

www.wormwoman.com/acatalog/index.html

www.vermitechology.com

www.kazarie.com

www.compostingcouncil.org

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost/mrcworms.htm>

References

Worms Eat my Garbage, Mary Appelhof

1-2-3 Worm Composting Bin, King County, Washington State

Worm Bin Composting: A Guide for Teachers and Households Chester County Health Department, Division of Solid Waste Management, Chester County, Pennsylvania

Master Composter Training Manual, John Van Miert, Whatcom County Cooperative Extension Service, Washington

Vermicomposting, Loretta Hernday, Master Gardener, Milwaukee County Cooperative Extension Service, Wisconsin

Worms Eat Her Garbage, And They Can Eat Yours Too, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, Auburn University, Alabama

Vermicomposting in the Classroom, Tom Crowley, Marinette County, University of Wisconsin, Cooperative Extension Service

Brochure information compiled by Lynn Barber, UF/IFAS/Hillsborough County Florida Extension Service

MCES Brochure, ENH1, November 2007

Extension programs and activities are open to all persons and do not discriminate with regard to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations.

Worms Eat My Garbage



Let worms dine on your food scraps & shredded newspapers.

They provide you with nutrient-rich humus!



UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

UF/IFAS Monroe County Extension Services

1100 Simonton Street, Suite 2-260, Key West, FL 33040
(305) 292-4501

Web site - <http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu>
E-mail - monroe@ifas.ufl.edu

Why Worm Composting?

Worm Composting is the process of using worms and microorganisms to produce rich compost from kitchen wastes. One pound of worms will turn 65 pounds of garbage into garden compost in 110 days.



Find a Suitable Place

Temperatures of 60° to 80°F are ideal, but worms will tolerate temperatures from 40° to 90°F. You'll want the location close to your kitchen to make disposal quick and easy. Even though a properly maintained bin is odorless, most would rather not have a box of worms inside their house. Most people prefer a porch or downstairs enclosure.

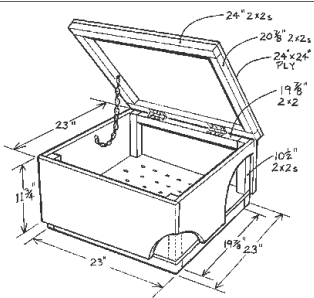
Purchase or Build a Container

The box size will depend on the amount of kitchen waste generated. A rule of thumb is one square foot of surface for each pound of waste per week.

2-person family = 3-4 lbs. of garbage per week = 2 ft. x 2 ft. box with aeration holes

4-person family = 6-7 lbs. of garbage per week = 2 ft. x 3 ft. box with aeration holes

Worm Bin Types



Build your own



Store bought bins

Preparing the Bed

Bedding is usually some light and fluffy cellulose, nontoxic material such as: **shredded** newspaper (not glossy), cardboard, computer printout, leaf mold or manure from grazing animals. The bedding should be moist with water, not soggy or water logged.

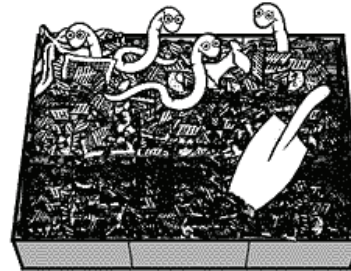


Get the Worms

Worms best suited for the job are called "red wigglers." They do a great job in composting the materials and thrive in the environment you've created. You'll need approximately two pounds of worms for each pound of garbage your household produces daily. Spread the worms gently over the top of the prepared bedding. The worms will wiggle into the bedding. After about two hours, pick off any worms still on the top and cover the box/bin with a lid or a sheet of black plastic or dampened newspaper.

Feeding & Care of the Worms

Worms feed on plant-derived products such as potato peels, lettuce leaves, moldy bread, spaghetti, citrus peels, tea or coffee grounds, coffee filters, tea bags, crushed egg shells, and garden waste. To feed your worms, push back the bedding, place the food, and cover it so that it's an inch or so beneath the surface. No need to chip or grind the food; let the worms and microorganisms do it for you. If you place the food in sequence in different locations in the bin over the course of several days or weeks, you won't come back to the same place twice.



Harvesting Castings

Once the food disappears and the contents of the bin have darkened into the moist castings (compost) material (about 2-6 months), it's time to harvest the compost.

There are two ways to harvest worms castings:

1. Push the contents of the bin over to one side. Place new bedding and food on the vacant side. The worms will migrate to the new bedding in search of food. After a few weeks, harvest the old finished compost and add fresh bedding to the bin until it is completely filled.



2. Dump the bin onto a large piece of plastic or plywood. Arrange the compost into several cone-shaped mounds. In a few minutes, the worms will move into the mound to escape light and exposure. Gently remove the top few inches of the pile, wait a few minutes and repeat.

Using Worm Castings

Use the composted worm castings as a nutrient-rich soil amendment around plants and in your garden. A good potting mix can be made with 1/4 part worm castings, 1/4 part peat moss, 1/4 part perlite, and 1/4 builder sand or garden soil. How about creating a worm compost tea? Place worm castings in a burlap bag, put the casting bag in a large container filled with water. Dunk the burlap bag like a tea bag. Use dunked tea mix as a foliar nutrient spray.

