



Backyard
Abundance

Create a Worm Bin

Discover the fun of vermicomposting.

Introduction

Vermicomposting is a fun way to create nutrient-rich compost from your kitchen scraps. It reduces pollution and landfill debris which helps move our community in a more regenerative and resilient direction.

Steps to Creating a Vermicomposting Bin

1. Acquire your worms.

The type of worms you want are red wigglers, which are available from a variety of sources. One pound of worms will eat about 3 pounds of scraps per week.

2. Acquire your bin.

Reuse an old dresser drawer or fish tank, build a box out of wood or find/buy used a plastic bin. The approximate size is 16" wide x 24" long x 12" deep or about 14 gallons. Make sure the bin is clean by rinsing it with tap water to remove any residues which may be harmful to the worms. For wooden bins, line the bottom and sides with plastic (an old shower curtain or plastic garbage bag works well). Drill small holes in the side of the bin above the bedding level.

3. Prepare the bedding.

Instead of soil, composting red worms live in moist newspaper bedding. Like soil, newspaper strips provide air, water, and food for the worms. It also gives you the opportunity to turn your newspaper into soil nutrients.

- Using about 50 pages, tear newspaper into 1/2" to 1" strips (shredders work great). Avoid using colored print, which may be toxic to the worms.
- Add torn up straw to keep newspaper from clumping (optional).
- Place newspaper strips into a large plastic garbage bag or container. Add water until bedding feels like a damp sponge—moist but not dripping. Add dry strips if it gets too wet.
- Add the strips to the bin, making sure bedding is fluffy (not packed down) to provide air for the worms. The bin should be 3/4 full of wet newspaper strips; it should be no more than 12" deep.
- Sprinkle 1/2 cup of healthy garden soil in bin to introduce beneficial microorganisms and to provide gritty particles that aid the worms' digestive process.

4. Add the worms.

Before adding the worms, find out how many worms you are starting with. The easiest method is to weigh the worms. If you do not have access to a scale, determine the worms' volume. The amount of worms is important for knowing how much food to feed them and for record keeping.

5. Bury food scraps under bedding.

Feed the worms fruit and vegetable scraps that would normally be thrown away, such as peels, rinds, cores, etc. Limit the amount of citrus fruits and do not add meats, bones, oils, or dairy products.

- Cut or break food scraps into small pieces to make decomposition more efficient (optional).
- Bury food scraps in the bin. Lift up bedding, add food scraps, then cover food with bedding.
- Feed worms approximately 3 times their weight per week; e.g., if you start with 1 pound of worms, add 3 pounds of food per week. Monitor the bin every week to see if the worms are eating the food. Reduce the amount if the worms are not actively crawling in and around all the food, .
- To monitor eating habits, place food in a different location each feeding. For example, cycle through the upper-left corner, then middle-left, then lower-left, then lower-right, etc.

5. Place a full sheet of dry newspaper on top of the bedding.

This will help maintain the moisture balance, keep any possible odors in the bin, and help prevent fruit flies from making a home in the bin. Replace this sheet frequently if fruit flies are present, or if bin gets too wet.

6. Cover and choose a spot for the bin.

Cover the bin with a lid made of plastic, plywood or cloth. If no holes were drilled into the bin, leave the lid ajar so the bin receives some air. Place the bin away from windows and heaters.

Local Sources of Red Wigglers

D & D Worm Ranch
Deb and Dave Hoffman
P.O. Box 164
Swisher, IA 52338
319-857-4478
deb@netins.net

\$15 for 1/2 lb.
\$24 for 1 lb.

Friends

Red wigglers can multiply rapidly. Getting them from a friend is also a great source.

Keep Your Worms Happy

- Add a little grit to the bin to aid their digestion. Powdered egg shells or soil works great.
- Feed them about once a week.
- If bedding dries up, spray with water.
- If bedding gets too wet, add dry newspaper strips.
- Keep the bin temperature between 64° - 72°F.