

Once established, you will notice other creatures in your worm bin besides worms.

Sowbugs, beetles, millipedes, molds and many other bugs and microscopic organisms create an ecosystem of their own and, also with the worms, break down food wastes.



HOW TO USE YOUR COMPOST

- Mix into the soil in garden or flower beds any time of the year.
- When planting your garden, add compost to the bottom of your seed row.
- Add compost to the bottom of holes when transplanting plants.



HARVEST TIME

Fully operational worm bins produce a steady supply of worms. These can be harvested and used for: fishing bait and as a starter supply for other worm bins.

To harvest the worms, shovel a small pile of compost onto some plastic in the sun. Let stand for a few minutes and scrape away the top portion. The worms should be hiding in a clump at the bottom of the pile.


Benefits of Worm Composting include:

- **Creating nutrients for your soil.**
- **Reducing the amount of food wastes you place in your garbage can and in the landfill.**
- **Enhances the natural cycle of our environment.**

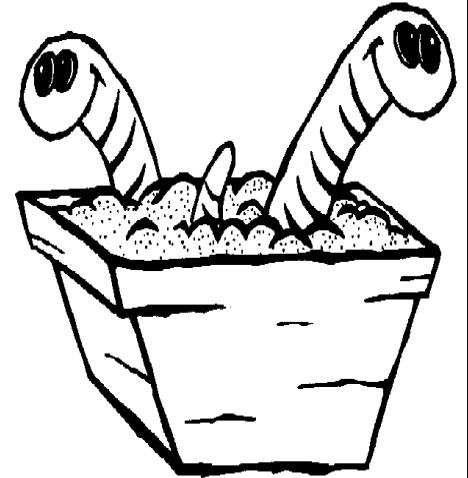
For more information regarding composting with worms, or backyard composting in general, contact:

**Countywide Solid Waste Programs
(509) 886-0899**



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COMPOSTING WITH WORMS



within
**DOUGLAS
COUNTY**

FOUR EASY STEPS TO VERMICOMPOSTING!

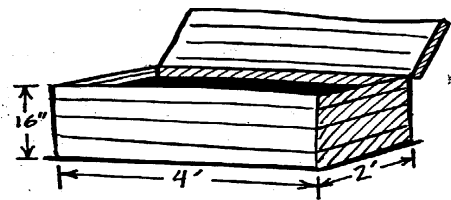
Vermicomposting, or composting with worms, can be done in the basement, garage or in a protected area outside your home. All you need is a worm bin, bedding material, food scraps and, of course, worms! Within 3 to 6 months, you can have rich compost for your garden or outdoor potted plants. There are 4 easy steps:

1The Bin

You can purchase a worm bin ready-made or make your own from an old cupboard, packing crate, or plywood and 2x4's.

- The box should be shallow, 12"-16" deep; red worms are surface eaters and need oxygen to breathe.
- Drill a few small holes in the bottom and sides for drainage and ventilation.
- Attach a secure lid to provide a dark environment for the worms. (The lid also keeps varmints out and worms in.)

The size of bin depends on the amount of food waste generated. Generally, a household of 4 produces between 7 to 10 pounds of food waste a week and requires a worm bin with a surface area of 2'x4'x16".



The Bedding

- Corrugated cardboard, newspaper, shredded office paper, straw or leaves can be used for bedding. Tear the cardboard or newspaper into strips 1 to 3 inches wide.
- Soak the bedding in water for a few minutes and squeeze out excess water.
- Fill the bin loosely with the bedding mixture. Do not pack down. It should be fluffy so air can circulate.

The Worms

Worms are the most important part of your operation. Redworms, also known as red wigglers, manure worms, or striped worms, are used for this process because they thrive on organic wastes (the earthworm, in contrast, needs mineral soils to survive). Red worms typically have red and grey stripes and can be found in yard waste compost piles or manure.

A couple dozen worms are enough to start your worm bin. You can get worms from a friend with an operating worm bin or search through compost piles. They can be purchased through catalogues or gardening clubs.



Let the Composting Begin!

- Once your bin is filled with a mixture of bedding, place the worms on top. They will burrow down below the surface.
- Now you're ready to feed them your food scraps. Put food scraps in the bin and cover lightly with bedding so food does not show.
- Place a sheet of black plastic on top to help retain moisture.

FOOD WASTE DO'S AND DON'TS

Do feed them:

- vegetable scraps
- fruit rinds and peels
- breads, cereals
- coffee grounds w/ filters
- tea leaves, bags
- egg shells

Don't feed them:

- meats, bones
- fish
- dairy products
- vegetable oil
- pet wastes

WORM BIN MAINTENANCE

In about 3 - 4 months, the compost will be mostly dark and crumbly. Pile the contents of your bin onto one side and put fresh bedding and food scraps onto the other side. The worms will slowly find their way to the fresh supply, leaving behind rich humus. When the first pile is completely composted (it could take another 4 to 6 weeks), remove it and replace with fresh bedding.