

WORM COMPOSTING

Wormeries are small scale composting farms where worms digest the organic materials.

How does this type of composting work?

Worm composting uses tiger worms rather than earthworms as they love to feed on very nutrient rich material such as our food scraps from the kitchen. The worms eat the organic material and digest it making a highly nutritious compost and liquid feed. You can buy a wormery like the one shown here, or make one yourself from plastic, metal or wooden containers.



Ideally you should use from 250gm (500 worms) to 1kg (2,000 worms) per bin.

Worms can be bought or can be collected from compost heaps, horse stables or manure heaps. The worm population can double every 40 days but will settle at a steady level based on the amount of food you are feeding them. Worms can eat up at least half of their own weight in food per day.

Like all forms of composting, getting started in the right way is the key. The first step is to get the worms comfortable in their new home! For the first layer of bedding you should use moist shredded paper, autumn leaves, straw, aged manure or mature compost (but not sawdust or chicken manure). Then add some vegetable scraps - remember it'll take a couple of days until bacteria first make these scraps suitable for the worms to eat.

Cover the wormery with a lid, piece of carpet, cardboard or sheets of newspaper and let the worms do their job. They are sensitive to light and will burrow down if the lid is removed. Feed only slowly until your population of worms has built up.

The Worm Menu

Worms will eat anything organic but don't add acidic foods such as citrus peels, onion and garlic. Be wary of fish skins and dairy products during the summer - they can smell in the heat. Also, the smaller the food particles, the faster they will be eaten.

They love:

- ◆ Vegetable scraps, fruit and vegetable peelings.
- ◆ Tea leaves/bags and coffee grounds.
- ◆ Vacuum cleaner dust or hair clippings.
- ◆ Moist, torn up newspapers and cardboard
- ◆ Crushed egg shells

How do we use the compost?

Worms produce a rich dark soil like compost called castings - this is a great compost for potting plants. A liquid "worm tea" is also generated and this brown liquid can be captured, diluted, and used as plant food.

