

Be Worm Wise

Eisenia foetida, commonly called red worms, are best suited for worm bins. As surface dwellers, they process large amounts of organic material in their natural habitats of manure, compost piles, and decaying leaves. They reproduce quickly and love to eat a variety of kitchen wastes.

What kind of food can I put in the worm bin?

Worms will eat most anything. A list of their favorites is given below. Feed your worms a good variety of produce scraps to keep an even chemical balance in the soil which keeps them healthy. Mostly fruit or tomato waste could make the soil too acidic.

Apples	Cake	Grapefruit Peels	Pears
Apple Cores	Carrots	Lettuce	Pineapple Rind
Baked Beans	Cereal	Oatmeal	Pizza Crust
Banana Peels	Coffee Grounds	Onion Peels	Potato Peels
Biscuits	Cucumbers	Orange Peels	Tea Leaves
Cabbage	Egg Shells*	Pancakes	Tomatoes

*good source of calcium carbonate, necessary for worm production

How much do worms eat?

Red worms eat almost half of their body weight each day. If you start with a pound of worms you can feed them 3-5 pounds a week. Don't worry about the worms when you go on vacation for a couple of weeks. The worms will eat the bedding when no food waste is available.

Will there be odors and bugs?

A properly maintained bin should not give off any offensive odors. Avoid adding meat scraps and always completely bury all food waste in the bin. Burying fruit waste will prevent fruit flies from being attracted to the worm bin. If your bin does not have air holes in it, turn the contents about once a week. Air is necessary for the worms and other microorganisms to work effectively. Without air you may develop anaerobic conditions that would allow gas-producing microorganisms to thrive.

Will I need to add more bedding?

Add bedding every 3-5 months or when there is not enough bedding material to completely bury the food waste. Fully prepare bedding in a separate container before adding it to the worm bin. Other suitable sources for bedding are shredded office paper or shredded corrugated cardboard.

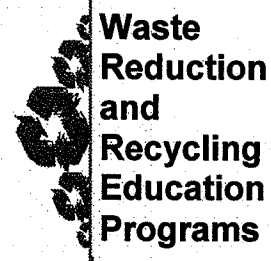
When can I use the vermicompost?

Compost should be available within 4-6 months.



A great place to recycle!

Clinton County
Department of Waste Management
1307 E. Townsend Rd., Ste. 102
St. Johns, MI 48879
989-224-5177



Make Your Own Worm Bin

When food scraps are thrown into the garbage a valuable resource is lost. Composting with worms or *vermicomposting* provides an alternative method for disposing of kitchen waste. Maintaining a worm bin is fun, educational, and will reduce household waste while providing you with a source of natural nutrients for your plants.

Worm Bin Recipe

1 covered shallow container with 6-12, half inch holes drilled into bottom. (Choose size according to food waste produced – Rule of Thumb: one square foot of surface space is needed for each pound of food waste produced per week. Container should be no deeper than 12" to prevent anaerobic conditions from developing.)

Newspapers

Jug or bucket of water

1-2 handfuls of garden soil

1 pound of red worms

Food waste

Make bedding by ripping newspapers into strips no wider than 2 inches. Put the paper in the container. Mix water into newspaper until bedding is thoroughly moistened. There should be no standing water in bottom of container. Mix in soil. Fluff bedding. Spread worms over top of bedding. Bury food waste. Cover bin and place in a location where the temperature will remain 55-77 degrees Fahrenheit.

Where can I learn more and buy red worms and compost bin supplies?

Flowerfield Enterprises
10332 Shaver Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49002
<http://www.wormwoman.com/>
(269) 327-0108

<http://compost.css.cornell.edu/worms/wormhome.html>

<http://yucky.kids.discovery.com/noflash/worm/index.html>