

Why Compost?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is an efficient way to turn fruit, vegetable, and yard trimmings into a beneficial soil amendment.



Vermicomposting:

- Saves you money by replacing store-bought soil amendments
- Nourishes plants with nitrogen, micronutrients, and beneficial soil microorganisms
- Helps hold soil moisture
- Benefits the environment by recycling valuable organic resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Is ideal for homes with limited space



Vermicomposting Do's and Don'ts

DO COMPOST

- Fruit & vegetable trimmings
- Coffee grounds & filters
- Tea bags
- Crushed eggshells
- Used paper towels
- Soft green plant trimmings

DON'T COMPOST

- Meat, bones & fish
- Dairy products
- Oils & grease
- Feces from carnivores or omnivores (i.e., dog, cat)
- Woody prunings

Resources

Free Workshops

Pre-register for our composting workshops on our website.

Website: www.ucanr.edu/compost

Learn more about our program and tips on various methods of composting.

The Rotline: 408-918-4640

Call with your composting questions!

Books

Worms Eat My Garbage, 1997, Mary Appelhof, Flowers Press, Kalamazoo, MI, 162 pp.

Rodale Book of Composting, 1992, G. Gershuny, Saint Martin's Press, New York, NY, 278 pp.

Worm Sources

Visit our website for local sources of red wiggler composting worms

About the Master Composter Program

The Composting Education Program teaches a 14-17 week training course in composting to interested volunteers every other year. Master Composters agree to give back 50 volunteer hours their first year, then 25 hours annually in the form of composting workshops and other educational outreach.



Recycling & Waste Reduction Commission
of Santa Clara County

Composting with Worms

Vermicomposting: Great for composting in small spaces!



Recycle your food scraps indoors or out!

University of California
Cooperative Extension
Composting Education Program
408-918-4640

Composting
Education
Program



COMMUNITY • HOME • CLASSROOM



Vermicomposting

Produces worm castings, a slow-release nitrogen-rich fertilizer that your plants will love!



Getting Started

1. Choose a bin.

Buy a bin or build one of your own out of wood or plastic. Your bin should have a tight-fitting lid, and holes in the sides for ventilation. Your bin also needs a way to drain excess liquid, either through holes in the bottom or an attached spigot. The rule of thumb for bin size is two square feet of surface area per person.

2. Pick a place.

Place your bin where it will not freeze or overheat -- in a kitchen, laundry room, garage, basement, patio or in your garden.

3. Make a worm bed.

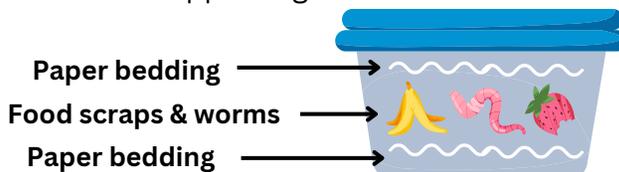
Worms like to live under lots of wet paper. This helps keep them cool and moist, gives them fiber to eat, and prevents fruit flies from getting into the food. To make your own worm bed, tear or shred newspaper into strips, then moisten them so they are as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Fill your bin 3/4 full with this moist "bedding." Do not use glossy paper or magazines for the bedding.

4. Adopt some worms.

The best composting worms are a species called "red wigglers" or *Eisenia fetida*. They are different from earthworms and nightcrawlers who live deeper in the soil profile. You can get red wigglers from a friend's worm bin or by purchasing them from a gardening store or worm producer.

5. Feed worms their first meal.

Start your worms off with about a quart of fruit and vegetable trimmings. Adjust your feeding schedule to the rate at which the food is disappearing.



Maintaining Your Worm Bin

Feed your worms according to a schedule that works best for you and for the size of your bin. If your bin starts getting smelly, you're likely overfeeding them! To avoid fruit flies, always bury food under the bedding. It helps to feed your worms in sections to make harvesting simple.

Add fresh bedding every 1-3 months.

Always keep a 4" to 6" layer of fresh bedding over the worms and food in your bin.

Keep bedding as moist as a wrung-out

sponge. In a plastic bin, add dry bedding to absorb excess moisture. Wooden bins may require adding water occasionally. Add ice cubes or cold water on especially hot days to cool the bin down.

Harvesting & Using Worm Castings

Your first harvest will be ready in 3 to 6 months. There are different methods of harvesting depending on your worm bin. Scoop out the castings and remove unfinished materials and rogue worms. Worm castings can be used in potting mixes or at the base of plants. It is great for both indoor and outdoor plants!



Worm Bin Troubleshooting

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTIONS
Bin attracts fruit flies	Food exposed	Add 4" to 6" of bedding to the top
	Overfeeding	Stop feeding for a few weeks & adjust feeding schedule
Worms are dying	Too dry	Add water until slightly damp
	Extreme temperatures	Move bin so the temperature inside is between 50 and 80F
	Acidic or salty food stock	Remove offending food