

# How to Worm Farm



There are many ways to have a successful worm farm. You can keep worms in a converted fridge or polystyrene box. These instructions focus on how to use the standard multi-tray systems.

## What you will need:

**Worm farm:** available from most gardening or hardware stores and some councils at a discounted price.

**Bedding material:** worm castings, shredded paper and/or coco coir block soaked in water.

**Compost worms:** at least one kilo or a minimum of 1,000 worms available from some community gardens, specialist breeders or hardware stores (make sure they are 'fresh') or take some from a friend's working worm farm.

**A worm blanket:** hessian bag, old towel, bath mat or similar.

**Container:** to catch the worm liquid, eg ice cream container.



## Essential set-up tips

- 1 Choose a cool and shady site for your worm farm outside or you can even have your worms inside (eg, laundry, classroom or balcony)
- 2 Assemble your worm farm (you won't need your second working tray for several months). *Tip: Prop up one end slightly so the liquid can drain out easily.*
- 3 Place the cardboard packaging or newspaper on the bottom of the first working tray (this has a perforated base). Add prepared bedding and then the worms. Cover with a 2cm thick layer of damp shredded paper.
- 4 Ensure the tap is fully opened with container underneath and gently pour in half a litre of water. Keep the tap open at all times to prevent worms drowning in the collection tray.
- 5 Cover bedding with a worm blanket.
- 6 Do not feed for one to two days to allow the worms to settle in.

## Adding a second tray

- 7 Add the second working tray when the first tray is full, this may take several months. Ensure the bottom of the new tray touches the castings in the first tray.
- 8 Add a 5 cm layer of bedding, worms and castings to the new tray. Add food to tray 2. If you have 3 working trays, repeat steps 7 & 8.

-Please recycle or compost this paper when finished-

# Feeding your worms

To allow the worms easy access to the food and discourage pests, bury the food in the bedding/castings. Do not leave food on top. Worms don't have teeth so they ingest food by 'sucking it in'. Worms can only consume their own body weight in food each day, so it is very important not to over-feed. An easy guide to remember is: **1,000 worms will eat approx. 1 cup of food per day.**



**Hot weather** - gently pour a litre of water per week over your worm farm. The castings should clump in your hands when squeezed, but not drip water.



**Going on Holiday** - don't panic! Worms can survive unfed for several weeks, provided conditions are right. Before departing, make sure the bedding is wet, the drainage holes are working, and there is plenty of food in the worm bin. The bin also needs to be positioned away from extremes of temperature. Worm will die in temperatures above 28 degrees.

## Worms Love

- Veggie scraps and leftovers (raw and cooked)
- Straw
- Teabags/coffee grounds
- Damp paper products
- Non woody garden refuse
- Natural fibre clothing



## Worms can cope with but don't really like

- Citrus
- Onion and garlic
- Meat
- Large amounts of very high nitrogen material like fresh lawn clippings, manure, coffee etc



## Harvesting the Castings:

After several months the majority of worms will be in working tray 2 (or 3). When this tray is almost full you can remove the first tray and use the castings. Or if you can't wait for the second tray to be full of worms, try feeding your worms at one end and harvest the castings from the opposite end. The worms will naturally stay with the food.

# Trouble-shooting

Problem	Likely cause	Solution
Smelly worm farm	Too much uneaten food and not enough aeration.	Stop adding food until there is none visible, and gently aerate. If the problem is serious sprinkle some garden lime through the bedding.
Vinegar flies	These are harmless but may indicate an acidic environment caused by too much fruit scraps.	Cut back on how much fruit you are feeding them. Add shredded paper. If the problem is serious sprinkle some garden lime through the bedding.
Ants	Bedding is too dry or acidic.	Add water and garden lime. Put worm farm legs in tubs of water with a few drops of kero / metho or smear Vaseline around the legs. Bury the food.
Worms in the liquid tray	This is usually due to heat.	On hot days add a layer of newspaper soaked in cool water to the top of the bedding or place ice on the blanket. Avoid manures and grass clippings as these will heat up as the break down.
Escaping worms	Some worms will move up the sides and onto the lid - this is fine. If there are masses of them, there may be problems in the bedding..	Monitor the temperature, moisture level, food amounts. Gently aerate the bedding.