



## Worm Composting

- Most fun! More time and effort
- Very compact –indoors or out
- Produces small amounts of excellent fertilizer

### Getting Started

**1. Choose a Bin** Buy a bin, or build one out of wood, plastic, an old dresser drawer, shipping crate, or barrel.

**What kind of bin?** Your bin needs to be 10" –16" deep, have a snug fitting lid, and holes in the bottom or sides for ventilation. To keep rodents out, the holes need to be 1/4" or smaller. The rule of thumb for bin size is two square feet of surface area per person. An average two-person house would need a bin about 2'x2'=4 square feet, or two bins that are 1' x 2' = 2 square feet each.

**2. Pick a Place** Locate your bin where it will not freeze or overheat—in a pantry, kitchen corner, laundry room, garbage, basement, patio, deck, or in your garden.

**3. Make a worm bed** Worms like to live under lots of moist paper or leaves. This helps keep them cool and moist, gives them fiber to eat, and prevents fruit flies from getting to the food. To make your worm bed, tear black and white newspaper into one-inch strips, fluff them up, and then moisten them so they are as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Fill your bin 3/4 full with this moist "bedding". Shredded, corrugated cardboard, leaves, compost, sawdust and straw can also be added in as bedding. Sprinkle bedding with a few handfuls of soil. Do not use glossy paper or magazines.

**4. Adopt Some Worms** Compost worms are often called "red worms" or "red wigglers". They are different from earthworms who live underground. You can find compost worms in an old compost pile, get them from a friend's worm bin, or buy them from a source listed on the back of this brochure. Start with one half to one pound, or two nice big handfuls.

**5. Feed Worms Their First Meal** Start your worms off with about a quart of fruit and vegetable trimmings (see "Do's and Don'ts" section). Then leave them alone for a couple of weeks while they get used to their new home



## Maintaining Your Worm Bin

**Feed Your Worms** about a quart (one pound) of food scraps per square foot of surface area in you bin per week. To avoid fruit flies and odors, always bury food under bedding. Don't dump and run!

**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.

### Worm-Bin Troubleshooting

Problems	Causes	Solutions
Worms are dying	Food and bedding all eaten	Harvest compost, add fresh bedding and food
	Too dry	Add water until slightly damp
	Extreme temperatures	Move bin so temp. is btwn. 40-80° F
Bin attracts flies and/or smells bad	Food exposed/overfeeding	Add 4"-6" layer of bedding & stop feeding for 2-3 weeks
	Non-compostables present	Remove meat, pet feces, etc.
Sow bugs, beetles in bin	These are good for your worm compost!	



## Harvesting & Using Worm Compost

**Harvest** worm compost at least once each year to keep your worms healthy. You can start harvesting 2-3 months after you set up your bin. Simply reach in and scoop out the brown crumbly compost, worms and all. You can also move the contents of your bin to one side, place fresh bedding and a handful of soil in the empty space and bury food there for a month or two. Harvest the other side after the worms have migrated to the new food and bedding.

**Using Worm Compost** will help you plants thrive by adding nutrients and humus to the soil. Sprinkle a 1/4" to 1" layer at the base of indoor or outdoor plants, or blend no more than 20% worm compost into potting mix or garden soil.

**Need More Help? Call the hotline: (415) 731 5627**



## Closed Air Composting

- Low maintenance, some set-up time required
- Prone to odor and insect problems
- 3'x3' yard space needed; two bins best
- Produces small amounts of compost infrequently

### Getting Started

You can buy a closed-air bin or make one. Find a spot with good drainage, dig a hole and bury the bottom 12-18" of the bin. Be sure to pack the soil firmly around the edges.

### Feeding

Feed your closed-air composter no more than once or twice per week. Always close the lid firmly after feeding. Water at least once a month so the compost is always wet. Don't add dry leaves or woody prunings. If it fills up too fast, let it sit for a few weeks then feed it less. The compost reduces in volume with time.

### Harvesting & Using

When your bin gets full (after 6-10 months), let it sit for 6-10 more months before collecting the sweet-smelling finished compost. While you wait, set up a second bin, or use another composting method during that time. Mix a 1" to 4" layer of finished compost into garden soil before planting, or spread it as a mulch around shrubs and trees.

### Problems?

If your closed-air system smells bad or has flies and/or insect larvae, add a 4" to 6" layer of dry soil and stop feeding the bin for 4-6 weeks.