

## CREATING A WORM COMPOST BIN

1. Use opaque material such as a Rubbermaid or Tupperware container. Look for bins with greater surface area, not height. Worms will only dwell in upper inches, not at great depths.
2. Plastic containers will retain moisture and heat better than wood.
3. Drill holes in the bottom of the container for proper drainage.
4. Drill holes in the top lid for aeration.
5. Set the worm bin inside another, larger tray, an additional lid, or use another bin of the same dimension. This bottom tray will collect excess moisture from the worm bin.
6. Place the worm bin on top of bricks or wood (in the drainage tray) to allow room for the excess moisture to drain.
7. Keep the bin in an environment that is 40°-80° F. Basements are ideal.
8. Remove the excess moisture once a week to avoid foul odors. Rinse out the bottom tray regularly.
9. Feed the bin for about two months, then move all finished compost to one side and begin feeding on the empty side.
10. The majority of the worms will migrate from one side to the other. For any remaining worms in the compost, expose them to light by leaving the lid off. Collect top compost and repeat exposure to light. Replace lid when compost is removed.
11. Do not fill up the entire bin. Worms will do best in 5-6 inches of material.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Worm Composting:

### Q: What do you need to start a worm composting system at home?

A: All you need to start is a bin, newspaper or cardboard bedding, worms, and kitchen scraps.

### Q: What do the worms eat?

A: Worms can eat all of your vegetable kitchen scraps such as melon rinds, lettuce, banana peels, vegetable peelings, etc. They also eat coffee grounds and tea bags, crushed egg shells, cardboard egg cartons, newspaper, and plain paper. Though worms can eat meat, it is NOT recommend to feed worms meat or dairy products due to the risk of attracting pests and developing foul odors in the bin. Also avoid oils, butters, and vinegars. Similarly, worms are not fond of onions, garlic, or citrus rinds.

### Q: Are these regular earthworms?

A: The type of worms recommended for use in a worm bin are called red wigglers. Their scientific name is *Eisenia fetida*. These are a type of earthworm but are not the large earthworms that you often find deep in the ground of your backyard. There are various species of earthworms, and not all earthworms are good composters. Red wigglers used for composting will not survive outside in the winter months in the Midwestern climate.

### Q: What do the worms actually do with the garbage you feed them?

A: Worms Eat Your Garbage! Though worms don't have teeth they are able to ingest approximately half their body weight in food per day. The waste left behind is called castings and the castings help to replenish the earth with vital nutrients, stimulate plant growth, and deter pests and diseases from harming plants.

### Q: Will my dog or cat bother the worms?

A: Pets do not bother a bin that has been well maintained and is odorless.

### Q: Does a worm bin attract mice, rats and other pests?

A: When a worm bin is properly maintained, it is essentially odor free and does not attract pests. As the worms are actually eating the food scraps placed in the bin, the food is not rotting or creating an unpleasant odor which may attract pests. Burying the food scraps under the paper bedding will also reduce the risks of pests.



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