

## BENEFITS OF WORM COMPOSTING

- An ideal method for people who have limited outdoor or patio space, especially those who live in apartments or condos.
- A fun individual, family, or community activity.
- Reduces waste (34% of the waste stream is yard and food waste) and methane gas, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.
- Improves soil and garden health.

# MAKE COMPOST USING WORMS!



OFFICE OF  
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COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

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[www.smcsustainability.org](http://www.smcsustainability.org)

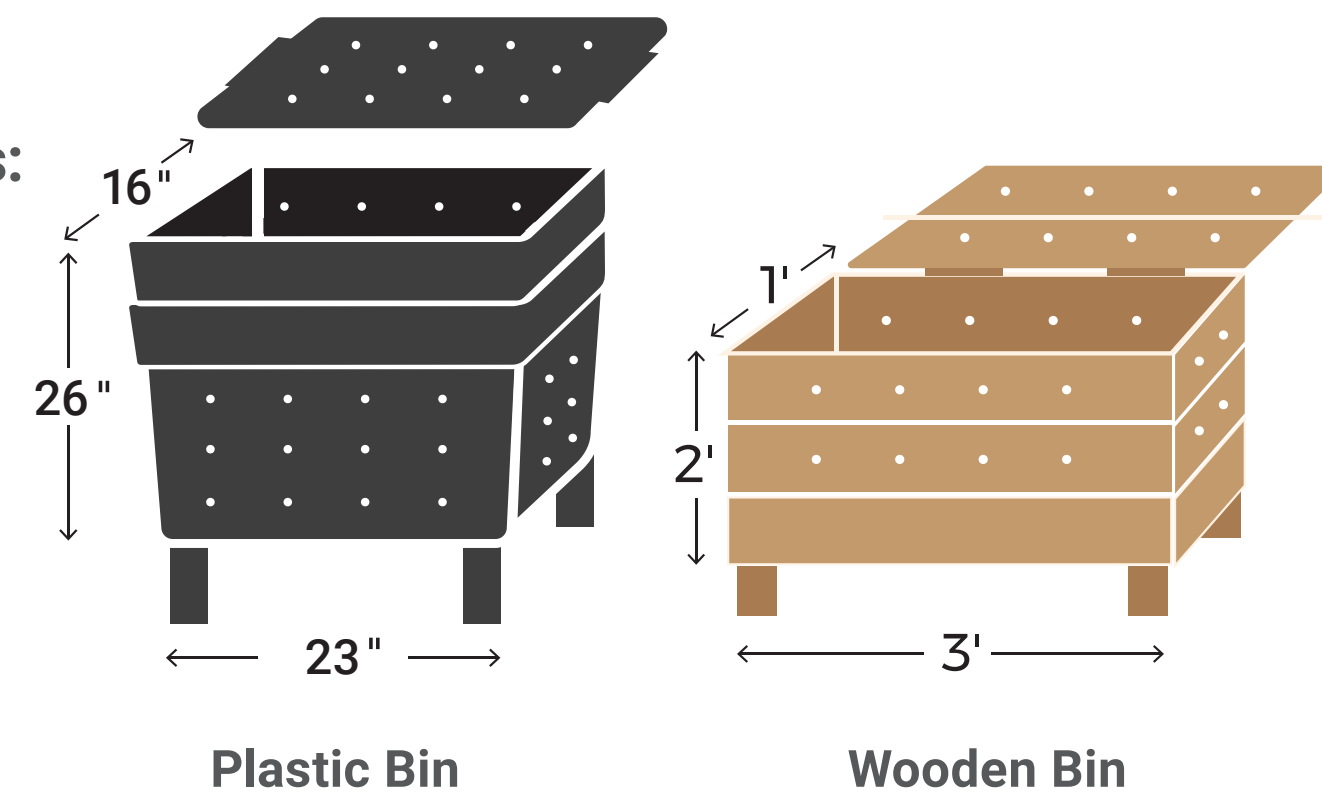
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## CHOOSE A BIN

Purchase or build a bin. Key bin characteristics:

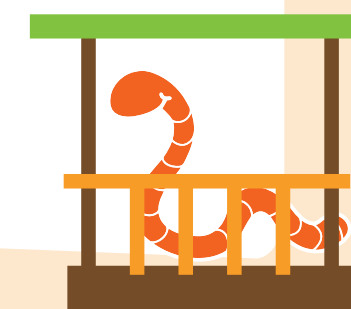
- 8-12 inches deep
- A lid to keep out flies and rodents and keep bin dark
- Drainage holes on bottom (1/4 inches or smaller)
- Tray/another bin layer to capture drainage



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## CHOOSE A LOCATION

Protect from direct rain, sun and excessive cold. Bin can be placed indoors or in sheltered outdoor area (e.g., shed, garage, balcony).



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## BUILD YOUR WORM HOME

### WORMS

Start with one pound of red wigglers (purchased or taken from another bin).

### BEDDING

- Holds moisture, discourages fruit flies, and is main medium for worms to live in
- Options: shredded cardboard or newspaper, or coir (coconut husk fiber)
- Immerse first in water so it is damp like a wrung out sponge

### CARDBOARD

Prevents materials from falling through holes on bottom of bin

### BLANKET

Finish by adding a blanket (e.g., more bedding, a piece of burlap). It discourages fruit flies.

### FOOD



#### USE

- Most fruits and vegetables
- Cereals and grains (e.g., oatmeal, pasta, rice)
- Coffee filter paper, tea bags
- Brown leaves, dead flowers
- Eggshells, rock dust, crushed oyster shells (Worms have no teeth, so these help pulverize food.)



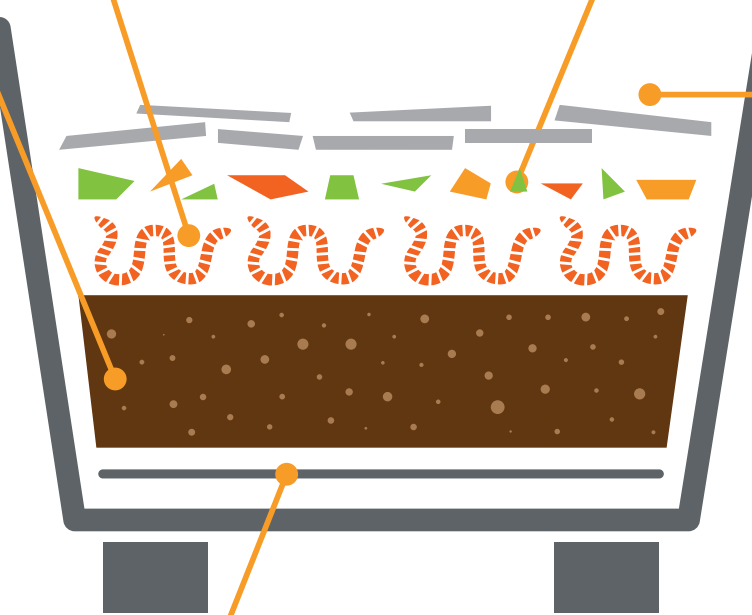
#### USE WITH CAUTION

- Breads
- Ginger
- Onions
- Garlic
- Potato skins
- Coffee grounds



#### DO NOT USE

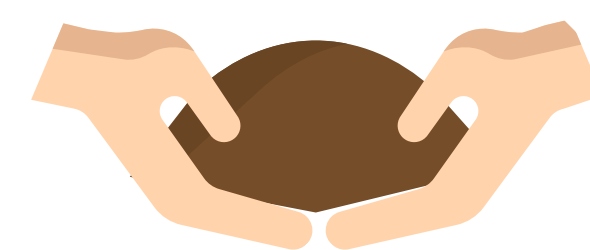
- Meat, poultry, fish
- Dairy
- Junk food (e.g., potato chips, candy, oils)
- Citrus fruits (e.g., oranges, lemons, limes)



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## HARVEST THE CASTINGS

- Worm compost (castings) is dark brown, rich, and moist.
- For single-tray bin, move contents of bin to one side. Add fresh bedding and food to empty side. Worms will migrate to "new" side. Collect castings in "old" side.
- For multi-tray bin, add new tray with fresh food and bedding. Worms will migrate up to new tray. Collect castings in bottom tray.



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## USE IT AS

- Planting mix, but not as the only planting medium
- Soil conditioner
- On lawns, to base of vegetable plants, or into soil around trees/shrubs



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## TROUBLESHOOTING

### Fruit flies

Reason: Exposed food.

Solution: Bury food in bedding. Add more bedding to cover food.

### Worms are dying or trying to escape

Reason: Environment is too wet or dry, or bedding is used up.

Solution: Add more bedding, moisten bedding, or harvest castings.



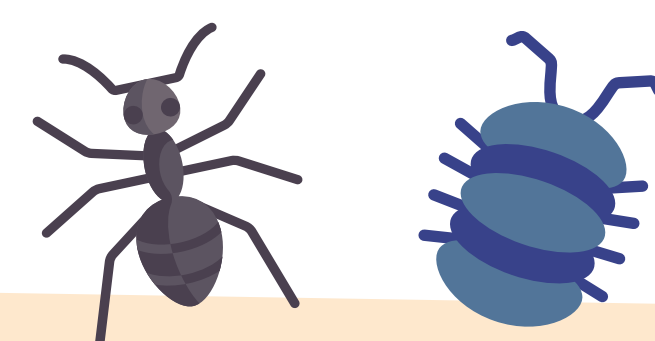
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## OTHER CRITTERS

**Good:** Springtails, roly polys, earwigs, pot worms, millipedes, mites (except earthworm mites)

**Bad:** Centipedes, fruit flies, earthworm mites, ants

"Good" critters do not hurt worms. There are different ways to handle "bad" critters, depending on what they are.



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## FEEDING TIPS

- Cut food into small pieces. Place food under bedding (but not buried in castings) in different part of the bin each time.
- Feed worms every day, or twice or once a week. There is no strict schedule. Feed worms just ahead of their rate of consumption.

