

## 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 With Worms!



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

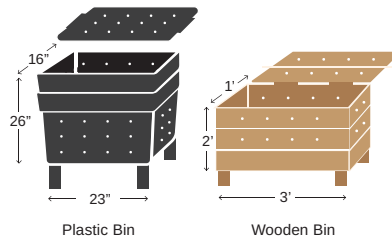
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## Choose a Bin

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
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Potato skins
- Onions
- 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:** Exposed food.

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

**Worms are dying or trying to escape:** 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.

