

Worm farms

Fact Sheet

Setting up your worm farm!



Worm farms can accept:

- ✓ Fruit and vegetable scraps
- ✓ Tea bags & coffee grinds
- ✓ Egg shells
- ✓ Citrus (small amounts)
- ✓ Plant cuttings
- ✓ Paper towels and napkins
- ✓ Dry cow or horse manure
- ✓ Pizza boxes
- ✓ Moist shredded paper
- ✗ No meat or dairy products

- Choose a shady, cool location with good air flow. Worms prefer temperatures between 18°C and 24°C.
- Make bedding material according to instructions and add your worms (you will need at least 1000 worms to start – 250gms).
- Cover the surface with a layer of damp newspaper, a pizza box, or old carpet underlay.
- Place lid on top of worm farm and leave the worms to settle in. Do not feed them for about one week – they will spend this time adapting to their new home.
- Start feeding your worms, placing items directly onto bedding layer. Chopping food scraps will help the worms get through it more quickly but is not essential.
- Always keep the food scraps covered with moist newspaper or equivalent. Avoid over feeding your worms as this may result in left over food rotting and smelling.
- Solid castings will take 6-12 weeks to build up.

- Liquid castings will collect in the bottom tray. Drain it regularly, dilute 1:10 and use on your garden – it makes fantastic fertiliser! Check this layer regularly to rescue any wandering worms, or ideally, leave the tap permanently open with a bucket underneath.
- When you fill your first working tray you can add the second tray and keep adding food. Make sure the bottom of the second tray is touching the food in the first tray.
- When the first tray has little or no food scraps left in it, you are ready to harvest the castings. They should be dark and moist, but not wet – like a damp sponge.
- Worms are sensitive to light so they tend to burrow downwards. Scrape off the castings layer by layer, allowing the worms to move down each time. Repeat until you have separated the castings and worms.
- Mix the castings with soil or potting mix, or mix with water and pour onto your garden.

Can I use any type of worm? Common garden worms generally cannot handle the intensity of a nutrient rich worm farm environment. Compost worms live closer to the surface, prefer wetter conditions and eat fresher organic material like manures, food scraps and mulch. The best compost worms are Tiger Worms, Red Wigglers and Indian Blues, which can eat about half of their body weight in one day.



Worm Farm Trouble Shooting

Problem	Possible causes	Solutions
Ants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too dry • Sugary items in worm farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add moist cardboard on top • Stand feet of the worm farm in containers of water to deter the ants
Smelly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally have no smell or smell earthy or loamy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix any uneaten food through and cover with a few sheets of damp newspaper
Small flies or other insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too wet • Too acidic • Too much food being added for the number of worms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add shredded newspaper to soak up the excess liquid • Keep draining the liquid castings from the bottom tray • Sprinkle on some lime, wood ash or dolomite to regulate the PH levels (lower the acidity) • Stop adding food for a while to give the worms a chance to catch up
Drowning worms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too hot – worms are moving down to the bottom tray to escape the heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drain the bottom tray regularly, or leave the tap open permanently and place a bucket underneath • Place some rolled up newspaper or other material in the bottom tray so the worms can 'climb' out of the liquid
Too hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worm farm placed in full sun or a hot shed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocate the worm farm – move it to shade, inside or under a carport or veranda • 'Fluff' the castings to improve air flow • Put ice cubes on top to melt slowly, allowing the worms to regulate their temperature • Ensure ventilation holes are open
My worms aren't moving up!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worms like being in their own castings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If castings are ready, take worms out of that tray and put them in the next tray
Going on holiday?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going for a week or two during cooler months – your worms will be fine if left with enough food, damp newspaper on top and the tap open for the bottom layer to drain • Going for longer or in hot months – put the worm farm in the coolest room in the house, take it with you or organise a worm sitter 	

Useful websites

foodwise.com.au
compostrevolution.com.au
sgaonline.org.au
frankston.vic.gov.au

reducelandfill.org
 Username: Frankston City
 Password: Frankston