

Fertiliser use

Compost from your bin system can be spread over established garden beds and lawns or mixed with potting mix when potting plants. Liquid fertilisers from worm farms should be diluted 10:1 and can be watered in to gardens.

Worm castings (manure) can be harvested by placing a pile of worms and their castings on some newspaper in a lit area. Leave in the light for a few minutes, the worms will dig down to the newspaper to move away from the light. Scrape off the top half of the pile, these castings will be worm-free and ready for your garden. As with compost, worm castings can be spread over established garden beds or mixed with potting mix.

Compost and worm farm tips

- Chop or shred food scraps and garden clippings so they break down faster.
- If your system starts to smell, add some garden lime to neutralise the odour.
- Worm farms should be positioned in a shady environment away from direct sunlight and rainfall.
- Compost bins should be placed in a sunny area as this will assist in heating up the compost, aiding decomposition. Make sure your compost bin is kept moist, as too much sun can dry your compost.
- Avoid adding weeds to your compost bin or worm farm as the seeds could still be active and may germinate when spread on the garden.
- Never place cat or dog faeces in your system. If your animal has been wormed, it will kill the worms in compost bins and worm farms.
- The base of your compost bin should be open so that compost can make contact with the ground.
- Cold weather slows microbial and worm activity, so expect a decreased decomposition in winter.

Supplies available from Council

Council offers free workshops on composting and worm farming. Contact Council's Waste Education Provider, EnviroCom, on 9703 5288 for further information or to register.



City Offices Service Centre
Braeside Avenue, Ringwood

The Ringwood Centre Service Centre
1 Civic Place, Ringwood

Croydon Service Centre
Civic Square, Croydon

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): 131 450

National Relay Service (NRS): 133 677

1300 88 22 33 or 9298 4598
www.maroondah.vic.gov.au



Composting & Worm Farms

Compost and worm farm systems are ideal for converting most organic kitchen scraps in to free fertiliser for the garden

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Community, Lifestyle, Opportunity

Australians generate over 43 million tonnes of garbage a year. According to the latest audit results, Maroondah residents send over 49% of organic waste to landfill which could be recycled at home through composting or worm farming.



What is composting?

Composting is the natural breakdown of organic material by micro-organisms and worms. It produces a wonderful nutrient-rich fertiliser.

There are three main types of compost systems: bins, tumblers and open heaps.

Each system has a slightly different design, but provided they are maintained and a variety of items are included, all will provide you with rich organic compost after eight to twelve weeks.

Why compost or worm farm?

Composting and worm farming:

- Saves valuable space in landfill.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduces the cost of waste disposal to the community.
- Compost and castings are great natural fertilisers for your garden.
- Compost enhances soil conditions.

Recipe for composting

Establishing and maintaining a compost bin is as easy as following four basic principles, known as **ADAM**:

Aliveness – composts are living systems, they contain countless numbers of good bacteria, fungi and insects which eat materials and convert it to rich organic matter.

Diversity – composting requires a mix of food scraps and dry garden waste for efficient breakdown of materials.

Aeration – compost should be turned regularly to maintain airflow through the materials. This will ensure the bugs in the compost stay alive.

Moisture – compost with the moisture equivalent to a wet sponge creates ideal conditions for rapid breakdown. If it is dry it will break down very slowly and if it is too wet it will become smelly.



When the compost is ready, it will be dark and crumbly with no signs of food scraps.

What is a worm farm?

Worm farms are an excellent alternative to compost bins and are ideal for people with small gardens or minimal garden waste. Worm farms can be purchased from hardware stores or you can make your own with a series of plastic or polystyrene containers.

Worm farming made easy

All worm farms should have at least two tiered containers. The bottom container will collect the liquid fertiliser. The worms live in the upper container/s, feasting on your food and paper scraps and producing castings. Worms eat most food scraps, but avoid feeding them meat, dairy products or large quantities of citrus and onions.

Keep your worm farm in a shady spot away from direct sunlight and rainfall.

Types of worms to use in your worm farm

Compost worms are different to normal earthworms as they prefer to live in the top structure of the soil, not the lower layers. Common species available are Red Wigglers, Indian Blues and Tiger Worms. They can be purchased from worm breeders or your local hardware store. You will need approximately 1000 worms to establish a worm farm.

