

# WORM COMPOSTING

## 1. Choose A Container

You get great results with either a worm bin or a worm can.

Worm Bin: Buy or build one. The bin should be 10-16 inches deep with a snug-fitting lid. Drill half inch holes in the bottom for ventilation and drainage. The rule of thumb for bin sizes is to have 2 sq. ft. per person. An average two-person home requires a 4 sq. ft. bin.

Worm Can: Buy a 32-gallon trash can or use a worn-out one. Cut the bottom out and drill holes in the sides. Bury it to its rim. Having two that are side by side works best.

## 2. Pick A Place

Locate your container where it will not freeze or overheat.

Worm Bin: The garage, patio, deck, or garden near the kitchen door are the best choices.

Worm Can: In a garden spot near the kitchen door is most convenient. Worm cans must have well drained soils. In clay and poorly draining soils, the can fills with water and turns foul!

## 3. Make A Worm Bed

Worms like to live under lots of moist paper. This helps keep them cool and moist, gives them fiber to eat, and prevents fruit flies from getting to the food. To make your worm bed, tear black-and-white newspaper into 1 inch strips, fluff them up, and moisten them so they are as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Do not use glossy paper or magazines. Fill your worm container with about 10 inches of moist bedding. Shredded white office paper or corrugated cardboard, leaves, and straw can also be added as bedding. Sprinkle it with a few handfuls of soil.

## 4. Adopt Some Worms

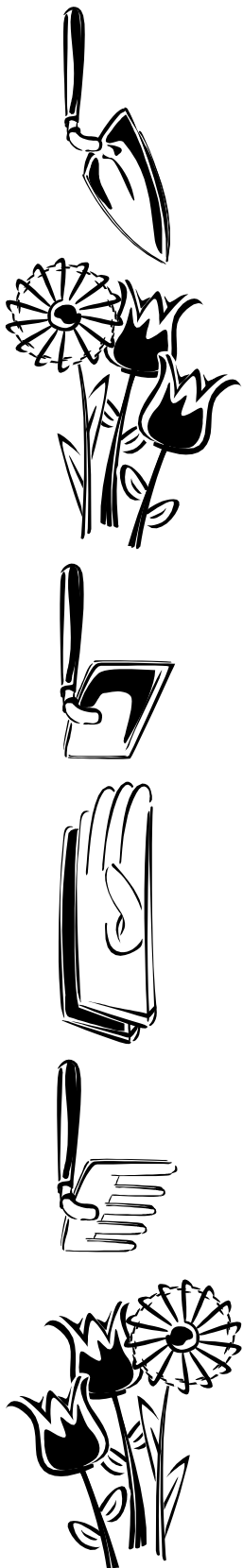
Compost worms are called red worms, red wigglers or manure worms. They are different from the earthworms and nightcrawlers that live underground. You can find red worms in an old compost pile, get them from a friend's worm bin, or call the WSU Cooperative Extension Office at 360-337-7157 for sources. Start with about 1 lb., or two big handfuls.

## 5. Feed Worms Their First Meal

Start off your worms with about a quart of food, then leave them alone for a couple of weeks while they get used to their new home.

Do feed worms: fruit and vegetable trimmings, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, eggshells, used paper towels, and soft, green plant trimmings. You can add small quantities of grains, beans, and bread.

Do not feed worms: citrus rinds; meat, bones, or fish; dairy products or grease; dog, cat, or bird feces; sawdust from plywood or treated wood; or woody prunings.



## 6. Maintaining Your Worm Container

- ☺ Feed your worms regularly. Avoid fruit flies and odors by burying food under the bedding. Don't dump and run!
- ☺ Keep a 4 to 6 inch layer of fresh bedding over the worms and food. Add fresh bedding as needed.
- ☺ Keep bedding moist like a wrung-out sponge.
- ☹ Do not stir or mix the bedding. Worms like their privacy and tend to crawl out if disturbed.

## 7. Harvesting Worm Compost

Worm Bin: Harvest worm compost at least once each year to keep your worms healthy. Move the contents of the bin to one side, place fresh bedding in the empty space, and bury food there for a month or two. Harvest the other side after the worms have migrated to the new food and bedding.

Worm Can: When the first can is full, move the top layer that is full of worms and uncomposted food to the second can. Continue feeding the worms in the second can, while you let the compost in the first can age. When the second can is full, dig the compost out of the first can.

## 8. Using Worm Compost

Worm compost will help your plants thrive by adding nutrients and humus to the soil. Sprinkle a 1 inch layer at the base of indoor plants, or blend no more than 20% worm compost into potting mix or garden soil. Worm compost is rich in soil bacteria, calcium, iron, magnesium, and sulfur and 60 other trace minerals. N-P-K is about 1- 0.1- 0.1.

### Building a worm compost

Our "Down To Earth" publication has plans for building a worm bin suitable to compost the food scraps from a family of four. If you don't have access to the internet, call Kitsap 1 at 360-337-5777 or 800-825-4940 and ask for the publication to be mailed to you.



**Kitsap 1**  
(360) 337-5777  
solidwaste@co.kitsap.wa.us  
www.kitsapgov.com/sw