

Worm farming



Why worm farm?

- Recycle food scraps into soil-like worm castings – great for the garden
- Make liquid fertiliser from diluted liquid or 'worm tea'
- Worms can be grown in worm farms, or in beds or troughs in the ground
- Worm farms can be kept outside, inside, on the balcony or in the garage
- They are ideal for apartments



Handy hint – red or tiger worms are the most commonly used worms. Generally sold by the thousand, worms can be bought direct from commercial worm growers or through a local nursery or hardware store.

Worm Farming Q & A

“My worm farm smells!”

Your worm farm can start to smell if the worms are being fed more than they can eat or if the worm farm is too wet. Start by feeding the worms slowly and gradually build up. Make sure that your worm farm is well drained. If it is too wet, the worms may drown.

“My worm farm has vinegar flies”

Add a handful of lime.

“My worms won’t multiply!”

Worms need the right conditions in order to breed. Keep worm farms well drained, cool (ideally 18-25°C), wet, and away from direct light. Limit acid forming foods such as fruits, grains and sugary foods as worms will not breed well in acidic conditions. Add a sprinkling of wood ash, dolomite or lime every few weeks to prevent the worm farm from becoming too acid.

“I have ants and cockroaches”

Keep a lid on your worm farm or keep a hessian sack or underfelt cover over the food scraps. This will discourage unwelcome visitors. If your worm farm sits on legs, place each leg in a bowl of water.

“I’m going on holiday”

Add shredded paper to the worm farm before you go.



Hint: Worms find smaller scraps easier & quicker to digest. Blend food scraps with water before feeding worms.



4 easy steps to successful worm farming

1. Choose your site

Worms don't like to get too hot, so make sure your worm farm or bed is in a well shaded spot.

2. Collect worm food

Worms like to eat food wastes like vegetable and fruit peelings, pulp from the juicer, tea bags, crushed egg shells and bread. They also like small amounts of soiled paper and cardboard (such as shredded egg cartons). Worms least favourite foods include dairy products, butter and cheese, meat, fish, fat and bones, very oily foods, citrus, onion and garlic.

3. Set up your worm farm

You can buy a worm farm, build one yourself with boxes, or make a worm bed in your garden.

Typical dimensions for a worm box are 30cm deep, 60cm wide and 90cm long. The box must have holes in the base to allow air in and for good drainage and a lid or cover of hessian or underfelt. Styrofoam fruit boxes are ideal. A tray underneath will catch liquid.

Make a bedding layer 10-15cm deep using a combination of finished compost, leaves and shredded paper. Soak the bedding layer before adding 1000-2000 worms. Spread the worms out gently on the surface and allow them to burrow down into the bedding.

Start adding your kitchen waste regularly in small amounts. Simply place the food waste in the box and cover it with bedding material or a handful of soil or compost. Don't add too much at once. Give the worms more food only when they have eaten most of their previous meal.



4. Harvesting worms

Harvest the worm castings/compost (vermicompost) by moving it all to one side of the bin. Add fresh bedding to the empty side.

Many of the worms will migrate to the fresh bedding in a few days.

The valuable worm castings can then be taken out and used.

Worms need:

- Moisture as they breathe through their skins and need to keep moist
- Drainage as they can suffocate if it gets too wet
- Shade as worms don't like direct light. Shade also discourages flies and other pests
- Alkaline surroundings. Avoid too many acidic foods such as citrus peels or onions

