

# Worm Composting Class Outline

## What is Worm Composting?

WC or vermicomposting is using a particular variety of worm to process food waste into nutrient rich castings. These castings then can be used as organic fertilizer

## Why vermicompost?

- Limited space,
- don't generate enough yard waste for regular compost pile
- generate extra income
- its fun

## What you need for success:

### 1. The Right Worms

E.foetida Red Worms, manure worms, tiger worms. They eat and produce better than nightcrawlers but if you want to produce worms for fishing then go with a nightcrawler.

More info on page:

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormcomposting.html>

### 2. The Right Environment

- Bin Can be plastic or wood; needs air holes
- Bedding Avoid acids: leaves, newspaper, cardboard, peat moss, coco coir, manure. Moist but not wet, er on the side of dry
- Temperature tolerate between 40-90 degrees best breed and eat at around 70 degrees. Light in winter. SHADE in summer

## How to decide what size bin you need?

Set aside your food wastes for one week, weigh it and go with that number. A 5 gallon bucket will hold up to one pound of worms. An 18 gallon tote will hold up to two pounds.

Worms need 1 square feet of space per pound. They will self regulate the population. Too little space, no breeding. More space, breeding city.

More about bins here:

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormcompostingbins.html>

### 3. The Right Foods

Worms eat 1/2 their weight in food per day.

Easier to say what not to feed: dairy, meats, lots of citrus or acid foods.

Worms eat a LOT faster when food is chopped finely. Feed worms 2-3 times a week. Less is better. Do not feed worms for a few days after starting your bin.

More about feeding worms:

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormfood.html>

#### **4. Right Harvesting Method/Technique**

You will want to harvest every 3-6 months or as needed.

Demonstrate pile method.

Other options are you can build a harvester or use the garbage sack method discussed on this page:

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormharvesting.html>

#### **5. How to use the castings:**

- Starter fertilizer on new seedlings
- Sprinkle fertilizer on established plants
- Make worm tea:

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormcastings.html>

### **What about an outside bin?**

Worms still need the good environment and temp so that can be more of a challenge to maintain outdoors. But if you get it right, the rewards are much more plentiful.

### **Troubleshooting/common Problems**

Bin too Wet: Add newspaper or peat moss wait one week to feed or water.

Too dry: use a nozzle sprayer to water bins.

Most bugs are beneficial and part of the ecosystem but if you have an overgrowth:

Mites: white mites put a piece of watermelon or cantelope in the bin for 12-24 hours then remove it, it will have most of the mites on it. Red mites: put a piece of white bread in the bin for 12-24 hours and then remove it.

Fruit Flies: Cover your food when you add it to the bin. Fly tape.  
Vinegar/water/soap traps

Rain/change in barometric pressure: put a light on the bin

<http://www.wormbincomposting.com/wormbinproblems.html>

#### **4 Biggest Mistakes in Worm Composting:**

#1 Wrong Bedding Choice- starter bedding should be cococoir or peat moss

#2 Overfeeding – worms can go weeks without food but too much food will spoil a bin in a hurry

#2 Overwatering – worms cannot swim or breathe in water, again err on the side of dry.

#3 Overstimulating – worms do better when we leave them alone and not “mess” with them a lot. If you are going to handle the worms, do it with gloved hands or soiled hands. The oils in your hands will make the worms suffocate