



Worm Farms

Worms like moist conditions, in a mix of soil and compost, not too wet, and not too dry. Keep your worms out of the sun and in a shady area, with a bit of shelter from wet weather.

Feeding your worms

As you feed your worms, they will multiply and consume more food, but to start off with it is best to use a small amount of food and add more it as it disappears. Worms will eat almost any type of vegetable and food scraps (cooked or raw), tea bags, coffee grounds, soft leaves, hair, damp cardboard and paper. They will even consume vacuum cleaner dust, and dog droppings (ensure that you do not use any animal manure if the animal has been recently wormed). Avoid onion scraps and citrus fruit, and definitely no meat or dairy products. Also avoid material contaminated with chemicals, such as lawn clippings that have been recently fertilised.

To make it easier for the worms to compost the scraps, it is best to add water to the scraps, soak overnight, and feed in the morning. You can even vitamise scraps, adding water as you go. This makes the food more available for the worms to eat immediately.

Worm facts

- Composting worms have no eyes, but can sense vibrations, light and temperature through special organs in the skin.
- Worms are hermaphrodites: each worm has both male and female sex organs.
- If worms don't like the conditions around them they will try to leave. If they don't find a new home in composted material they will die.
- The population in a well-maintained wormery will double every 2-3 months.
- If conditions are right, each adult worm can produce up to 12 babies per week.

Make your own worm farm

You can build your own worm farm using styrofoam boxes, old tyres, wooden crates or similar type of containers. You will also need to make sure the wormery is kept moist (not too wet, not too dry). Various styles of worm farm containers are available at hardware stores and garden centres. Check around as prices vary. Worm farms should be kept off the ground to prevent infestations of pests. There should also be a drainage tap or water collection area within the container in case it gets too wet.

What sort of worms can I use?

Special composting worms can be purchased from garden centres and hardware stores. The best types of composting worms are Tiger Worms, Red Wrigglers and Indian Blues. You will need at least 2,000 worms to get your worm farm started. Composting worms eat only organic matter, and hence are the best sort for using in worm farms. The normal earthworms that you find in the garden soil are earthworkers, they burrow and aerate the soil, and are not good composters.

Interesting worm links

www.wormsgalore.com.au

www.gardenproject.org