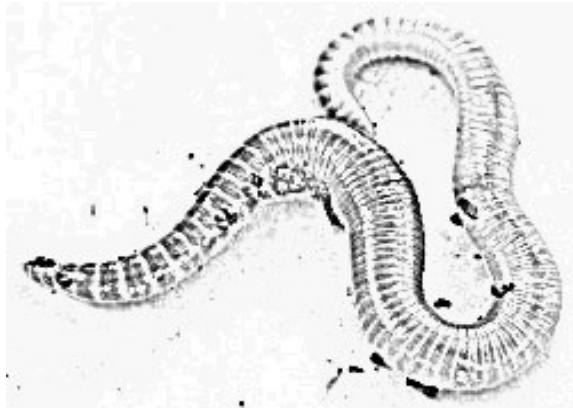


COMPOSTING WITH WORMS

how to make super-rich, biologically active
compost using worms, kitchen scraps, and
newspaper



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STEP 1

GET

COMPOSTING

WORMS

You will need Red Wiggler worms in order to do worm composting. Red Wiggler worms are a specific type of earthworm which are surface dwelling and specialize in breaking down rotting organic matter.

They do not need soil.

Composting worms cannot live in the soil like your garden variety earthworm. Do not add composting worms to your garden thinking they will do some good.

They will die.

Think of it this way.

Blue Jays and Humming Birds are both birds.

But if you ask a Blue Jay to act like a Humming Bird, you're in trouble.

And if you ask a Humming Bird to act like a Blue Jay, you're also in trouble.

Leave composting to the composting worms and burrowing to the earthworms.

STEP 2

SET UP A WORM COMPOSTING BIN

If you bought a bin from me or from somewhere else then you're good to go.

If you need a bin, you can download free worm composting bin plans at my website: www.gotoworms.com and make a bin for about \$10.

Red Wiggler worms like temperatures between 40°F and 90°F. Inside the house is an ideal place to keep composting worms. Worm bins do not smell bad.

IF THE BIN STINKS, SOMETHING IS WRONG

Worm bins can be kept outside on a porch or somewhere in 100% shade (for those of us in the South).

If you live in Texas, then you absolutely must have 100% shade for worms outdoors.

It's also okay to add composting worms to an existing composting bin, as long as it's in the shade! Once again this is for us Texans. I don't recommend using worms in compost piles, because they tend to dry out. But if yours stays plenty moist, go for it.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Worms like it dark

and

Worms like it moist

You also need to understand that composting worms do not eat the old banana peels, potato peels, and shredded newspaper we give them.

They eat the bacteria and fungi that break down the old banana peels, potato peels, and shredded newspaper.

So if you're starting a brand new bin, fill it with some kitchen scraps and wet newspaper. Close it up for a week or so. Then add the worms.

If this isn't possible, then it's okay to add the worms right away. Just know it will take longer for them to settle in.

WHAT TO FEED THE WORMS

Worm composting is just like regular composting except that we don't want hot temperatures.

Composting worms drive the composting process by aerating the compost, ingesting bacteria and fungi, and pooping out a rich mixture of microbial life.

There are 2 components to feeding: greens and browns.

GREENS

Greens are your kitchen scraps. Generally anything you might chop up and use in the kitchen

EXCEPT:

MEAT, GREASE, BONES, OR DAIRY

Greens include:

onions

orange peels

potato peels

banana peels

rotten tomatoes

green beans

celery hearts

carrot peels

strawberry tops

lettuce

BROWNS

Are cellulose rich items such as:

newspaper

office paper

leaves

cardboard

cardboard egg cartons

coffee and tea filters

paper towels

paper towel and toilet paper rolls

RICE AND PASTA

Rice and pasta and beans can be added in small amounts as long as they contain no grease or meat.

HOW TO FEED WORMS

Layer the bin with a 1” layer of greens and cover well with 2” of browns or more.

In warmer weather, bury the food to avoid fruit flies and gnats.

Too much green can kill your worms, but too much browns will do no harm.

Let the food given disappear before adding more.

If you bought a pre-stocked bin from me, it will be easy to tell when the food has disappeared. It will be gone, and all that remains is a brown pile of a soil-like substance.

If you're starting from scratch:

In the beginning, the bin will look like paper and muck. It's okay to keep feeding.

It will take 2 or 3 months for the brown base of compost to develop.

STEP 3

BE PATIENT

&

WAIT

As much as you might like to, you cannot hurry the composting process. You need to allow ample time for the composting environment to develop in your bin.

If you are starting from scratch, expect to wait 3 months before seeing anything resembling compost in the bin.

And then wait another 3 months before harvesting anything from the bin.

If you bought a pre-stocked bin from me, then I've already done the 6 months of waiting for you, and you already have a healthy environment and compost in the bin right now.

With a pre-stocked bin, simply feed until the bin creates the amount of compost you want, and then harvest.

WHEN YOUR BIN IS FULL

It's time to split the bin or harvest.

You will split the bin if:

You don't want to harvest the compost

And/or you want more worms.

HOW TO SPLIT THE BIN

Get another worm composting bin.

Put 1/2 of the contents from the first bin into the new bin.

You can do this as many times as you like.

If you never split your bin, the worm population will stabilize with the amount of space and food available. You don't have to worry about being “overrun” with worms.

Read on to find out about harvesting worm compost.

STEP 4

HARVESTING WORM COMPOST

When you are ready to harvest your worm compost, you will:

dry out the compost a little bit

coax out the worms

DRYING THE COMPOST

If you have a plastic bin and/or are feeding mostly kitchen scraps, your compost will be quite wet.

Wet worm compost is sticky and very difficult to deal with.

One of the easiest ways to dry it out is to dump the entire bin contents in a cardboard box.

Put a baking pan or board underneath so the bottom doesn't give way when you pick it up.

Let it sit for a week or so, and the compost should dry out considerably.

When it reaches the crumbly stage, it's ready. Don't worry, there is still plenty

of moisture left for the worms.

SEPARATING THE WORMS

There are many methods of separating worms. I won't lie to you, it's not an easy process. But, with a little trial and error, you'll find a method that works well for you.

SCREENING

The fastest method of separation is to push the compost through 1/8" hardware cloth. It is essential that the compost is crumbly, or else it will gunk up the screen and cause great frustration.

The cloth doesn't need a frame. It is strong enough to hold up on its own.

LIGHT HARVESTING

Pile up some compost on a tarp or on a cookie sheet.

Shine a bright light on the pile, the brighter the better.

Slowly brush the top and sides of the pile, removing the compost to another pile.

The worms will continue to escape the light by moving downward and inward.

Eventually you will have a pile of compost, and a pile of worms.

CORRALLING

Corralling worms uses some type of trap baited with food to get worms to move into the “corral”. Once corralled, they can then be removed.

Get a citrus bag, potato sack, or some other bag with holes.

Fill it with food and bury it in the bin.

Wait a day or two.

Remove the bag, which should have a high concentration of worms. If not, wait longer.

Repeat as many times as necessary or use more than one bag.

Or, lay a piece of burlap or a piece of 1/8” hardware cloth on top of the bin contents. Place food on top. Worms will move up into the food.

Your best approach to compost harvesting is to give yourself a week or two to accomplish it.

It takes time for the worms to move if you are light harvesting or corraling.

Screening works well when the compost is at the perfect moisture level. If the compost is too wet, you'll need time to keep drying.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You can find a lot more detailed information as well as a free online worm composting course at my website: www.gotoworms.com

Also feel free to e-mail me with any questions: wormcoach@gotoworms.com

or call: 210-332-2877

I think once you try worm composting, you will really like it. It's so much easier than the compost pile.

One of the main benefits of worm compost is that it helps restore the complex living community within the soil. It is that soil community of bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes and more that support healthy, thriving plant life.

Adding compost to the soil also increases its water holding capacity. That is critical to the world in this period of climate change. Because bare, dry soil erodes away, and can no longer support the plant communities we cherish.

To your composting success,

