



## What is **Worm Composting?**

**It's** letting worms eat your garbage - food scraps like banana peels and eggshells!

**It** can be done inside your house or office using a simple plastic container!

### Why **Worm Compost?**

**It's** fun! **It's** easy!

**It** creates a high-quality soil amendment that can enrich your garden or household plants and save you money on fertilizer!

**It** allows apartment dwellers, office workers, school children or anyone to recycle food scraps on-site year-round. This means you no longer need a backyard or good weather to be a composter!

**It** keeps food waste from going into the trash or down the disposal. This saves water and energy and avoids the environmental and economic impacts of collecting, transporting and landfilling these wastes!

### Who can **Worm Compost?** Everyone!

**It's** a great way to supplement your outside backyard compost pile, especially in the winter.

**It's** great for people in apartments, condos, or for people who live in an area where wildlife make it impossible to have an outdoor compost pile.

**It's** easy for people who are physically unable to manage an outdoor pile!

**It's** fun for families - a great kid project!



The worms crawl in, they won't crawl out. They help you take less garbage out. They're perfect pets, they're clean, they're quiet. They make compost, from a food-waste diet.



## Rounding Up Your **Worms**

The worms you want for worm composting are known as **redworms, red wigglers or Eisenia fetida**. They can be found in old compost piles or purchased from worm suppliers.

Start with about **one pound of worms**, which amounts to two big handfuls of worms.

Ordinary earthworms are not suitable for indoor composting because they require the deep soil and cooler temperatures found outside, so make sure you start your bin with redworms.

### Local sources of redworms:

"The Worm Man"  
John Anderson, 970-308-2397

The Flower Bin  
1805 Nelson Rd., Longmont, 303-772-3454

A.B.C. Composting  
Michael Kane, 303-919-1508  
[www.abccomposting.com](http://www.abccomposting.com)

### Mail order:

[www.wormwoman.com](http://www.wormwoman.com)

*If ordering worms through the mail, prepare the bin immediately and release the worms as soon as possible.*

Disclaimer: The identification of companies, products and materials listed in this brochure does not constitute endorsement, approval or recommendation of any kind by the BCRC, Boulder County Resource Conservation Division, or Boulder County and is provided for informational purposes only.



### Resource Conservation

1901 63rd Street · Boulder, CO 80301  
Tel: 720.564.2220 · Fax: 720.564.2227  
[www.bouldercountyrecycles.org](http://www.bouldercountyrecycles.org)

# WORM Bin Composting



Did you know...

**worms can eat our garbage!**

Worm Composting or "vermicomposting" recruits red wiggler worms to convert our non-meat food scraps into a valuable resource - COMPOST - that can be used to improve the health of our yards, gardens and houseplants!



# Getting Started

To compost with worms, you'll need:

1. A bin for your worms
2. A good place to locate your worm bin
3. Bedding material
4. Worms
5. Food for your worms

# Making Your Worm Bin

Red wiggler worms prefer shallow dark (opaque) bins, no more than 12" deep. You can build a wooden bin or purchase a plastic container. Ten-gallon plastic storage bins are available at most discount and home improvement stores. Drill holes 1/4" or smaller in the lid and around the top of the bin (about 6 holes on lid, 6-8 on bin.) Be sure the bin has a snug-fitting lid. For a two-person household, use a bin measuring 2' long by 2' wide by 8" deep. Larger households of four to six people will need a bin measuring 3' long by 2' wide by 1' deep. The ideal worm home has one square foot of surface area for each pound of garbage to be processed.

# Bedding for Your Worms

Worms like a bedding of moist newspaper. Worms breathe through their skin, which is covered with water, so putting them on dry bedding will cause injury. Prepare bedding by tearing sheets of newspaper into 1" strips. Do not use glossy paper or magazines. Moisten the bedding with a spray bottle until it feels as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Fill the worm bin with this moistened material. Add a few handfuls of soil or compost to get the process started.

# Adding Your Worms

A 10-gallon bin can easily handle a pound of worms. There are about 1,000 worms in a pound. Remove worms from castings, and dump them into the bin. They will find their way down to the bottom of the bedding. One pound of worms eats approximately 1/2 pound of food scraps a day.

# Feeding Your Worms

Feed your worms a buffet of chopped-up fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, used paper towels, crushed eggshells, and bread (even moldy bread). Avoid meat, dairy, oils, hot peppers, chips and candy. Collect worm food in containers that have a lid to prevent introducing fruit flies. You may also microwave or freeze food before giving it to worms to help prevent fruit flies. Your worms are actually eating the bacteria that are decomposing the food scraps but it's more fun to say: worms eat our garbage!! Just open the lid of your bin and place the food on top of the bedding. Feed your worms 1cup of food every other day. Place the food in a different location each week. If you begin to develop fruit flies or there is an odor coming from the bin, you're overfeeding. Put any extra non-meat, non-dairy food waste in your outside compost bin if you have one or start a second worm bin.



# Location, Location, Location!

Where you locate your worm home is very important. Redworms like a temperature range of 55°- 77° F. Your garage, basement, or even under the kitchen sink are good places for your worm bin. Don't worry, worms won't leave the bin ever! Outside the bin, its dry and light, two things that will harm worms.

What if...	Possible Cause	Suggested Remedy
Worms are dying or seem to be gone	Bedding and food may be depleted Bedding too dry or too wet  Temperature too hot or cold	Add fresh food and bedding Keep moist as a wrung-out sponge, add more water or dry bedding to soak up excess moisture  Move bin to an area where temperatures are 55°-75° F
Bin attracts flies or smells bad	Overfeeding Inappropriate food	Don't feed for a week Don't use meat, dairy, fats, bones or pet waste
Too many worms	You have a very healthy bin	Divide bin, get a bigger bin or give worms away Put extra worms in the garden, yard or outdoor compost bin
Worms on insides of bin or underside of lid	Too strong of food is present (hot pepper or pungent herbs)	Pull offending food out of bin, worms will return to bottom of bin

# Maintaining a Healthy Bin

In two to three months you will need to give your worms fresh/more bedding. You will discover that your worms have devoured their bedding and left a large amount of worm castings (compost). Simply shred newspaper, moisten, and fill bin up to top.

# How to Harvest Compost

1. Take lid off of the bin.
2. Worms will move to the bottom of the bin to avoid bright light.
3. Brush the compost off the top layer and set aside the finished compost for use. Worms will burrow down farther into the bin. Repeat until only 1-2 inches of compost is left in the bin with worms.
4. Make sure the bin has fresh bedding. Your worms are ready to work!

Worms reproduce fast and you may find more worms than you started with, so start a new bin, give worms to a friend or put extras in your outside bin (it's not necessary to add worms to outdoor pile but worms can survive there also.)

# Using Your Worm Compost

Congratulations! You've done everything right, your worms are fat and happy and they've given you a heaping helping of compost. What do you do with it?

To make good use of your compost, just spread a 1/4" to 1" layer at the base of garden plants, or mix some into a potting mix for indoor plants or vegetable transplants. No more than 20% of the mix should be worm compost. Worm compost consists primarily of worm castings (yep, you guessed it, worm castings are just plain worm poop!) that supply nutrients and humus to your soil. This helps all of your plants thrive!

