

Let's get started!

Worm farms can be run indoor or outside. They consist of a bin made of plastic, wood or even a bathtub where the worms and bacteria live while breaking down your organic wastes.

The most important elements of a worm farm are:

1. Good drainage
2. Good air movement

4 easy steps to successful worm composting

1 Choose a site

Your worm farm can be located directly on the earth in the garden, or in a basement or a garage. A sheltered spot that gets some sun is ideal but be careful as a bin in full sun can get too hot and kill the worms! When temperatures drop below freezing, small container bins should be moved inside or wrapped with carpet for insulation.

2 Make your worm farm

Any box or bin with vent holes and a solid lid can be used as a worm farm. A box 500 x 500 x 500 mm will service a family of four. Position your farm directly on the earth, with weed matting on the base. Wood is the best material (treated or untreated) but plastic works too. If the box has a bottom floor, you will need drainage holes. Small vent holes (4 mm) in the top of the sides are important to allow air circulation.

If you want to catch the liquid fertiliser: try this stacking-style bin: build or find bins 30 cm deep, and 60 cm square. Securely stacked fish bins or styrofoam boxes are ideal.

Base bin – The base bin catches the liquid run off which drips from the bins above.

Next 2 stacking layers – This is where the worms live. Drill 10 mm holes in the base and 4 mm holes in the sides of these two bins for drainage and air circulation. The bottom holes allow the worms to move up through the floor to reach fresh food. Ensure the top bin has a lid to keep out rain, light, and flies.

3 Add bedding, worms and food scraps

Bedding is the material worms live and breed in, then eventually eat. Fill the bin/s one quarter full with bedding (moist shredded paper, rotten pea-straw, peat, or compost) then add your worms along with an equal volume of food scraps. Allow the farm to settle in for 2 weeks before putting in more food scraps. Adding a little and often is the key to success. In the stacking system feed only the top tier – as it fills, move to the bottom of the stack.

Mixing fresh waste with older bedding or adding in rotting food will speed up the composting process.

Hint:

Use tiger worms and red worms for composting. For a typical family of 4–6 start with a minimum of 1 kg of worms, this will steadily increase to a large enough population in 4–6 months. After your worm colony is established, you can spread worms in your compost heap or give them away, as they will quickly replace what you've taken away!

4 Using your compost

It can take 6–8 months for your worms to turn waste into castings, this can then go straight onto the garden or pot plants. Just a handful per planting will do wonders. Cover castings to ensure moisture and nutrients are conserved. To use the liquid run off dilute it 10:1 and add to the soil or leaf. You can also create liquid from castings by adding a handful to a bucket of water, stirring and let sit for 4 hours.

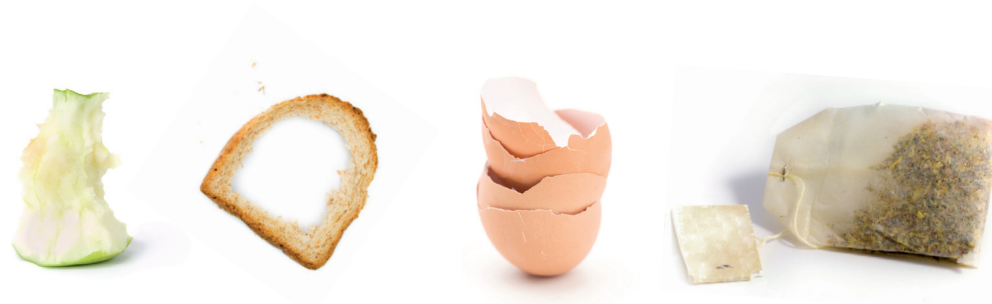
What can your worms eat?

- Vegetable & fruits scraps
- Bread, pasta & rice
- Tea bags/leaves & coffee grounds
- Vacuum cleaner bags contents
- Shredded newspaper, cardboard & handy towels
- Aged manure
- Egg shells

Hint: Chopping food scraps into smaller pieces will speed up recycling, especially in indoor systems.

Worms don't like:

- Fats & oils
- Citrus skins
- Onions, garlic or spicy foods
- Meat
- Dairy products
- Fresh grass



Where can I get my worms?

- Try the Yellow Pages under 'worm farm' or 'garden supplies'
- Try the internet and Google 'worm farm nz' or 'compost worms'



Make a worm farm from reused and recycled materials

You will need:

- 2 – 3 car tyres
- 1 close fitting lid (a piece of wood with a rock on it)
- Approximately 35 newspapers (avoid glossy pages)
- Old carpet or hessian sack (optional)
- 250g tiger worms

Building your worm farm

- 1 Soak the newspapers in water, then shred into thin strips. Stuff 2 tyres full. You may need the third tyre in about four months.
- 2 Place an old sack or carpet on the ground, then place your first tyre on top.
- 3 Fill this bottom tyre with bedding material (i.e. horse manure, rotting pea-straw, compost) and then tip the worms in. Cover with a thick layer of wet newspaper and a piece of carpet or hessian sack. Now put the other stuffed tyres on top.
- 4 Feed regularly, starting with an 2 litre ice cream container full of kitchen scraps, under the newspaper. Water the worm farm if it seems dry to touch, and keep a bit of newspaper or carpet on top to keep it dark and discourage flies.
- 5 Place your lid on top of the tyre stack with a rock on top to prevent nosey pets from entering.
- 6 Add the third tyre when you need it, about four months later.
- 7 After about nine months, your bottom tyre will be compact and ready to empty of wonderful worm castings (vermicast). Do this by sliding out the bottom tyre, remove the vermicast and spread on your garden, then cover with mulch.
- 8 The empty tyre is now ready for reuse – stuff with shredded, moist newspapers and place on top of the tyre stack.



Worm Composting

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*A fun easy way for people of all ages
to recycle kitchen waste*



For more information:

Christchurch City Council, PO Box 237, Christchurch
Phone (03) 941 8999 | Email waste@ccc.govt.nz

www.ccc.govt.nz/composting

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