

The Benefits of Composting

- Make your own free compost; save money on fertilizers
- Help your garden and house plants become more healthy
- Keep organics out of landfills where they make toxic liquids and release methane gas
- Reduce your garbage by up to 30%
- It's fun and easy!



Worm Bins

Indoor worm bins can be bought or built at home. They come in various sizes and can be one bin or multi-bin systems. Every design should have these features:

- Box or bucket with lid to contain worms
 - Drainage for excess moisture to escape
 - Air holes screened to block worms and flies
- Contact the RDOS for worm bin information.

Getting Started

Bedding

Start by filling your worm bin completely with bedding. Types of bedding are listed on the right of this page. Bedding should be moist to the touch but not drenched. It should feel like a well wrung out sponge.

Top up your bedding every time you feed the bin. Add dry bedding (torn newspaper) if condensation builds up.

Add hair and dust as you sweep up. The worms need bits of grit to help digest food.

The Worms!

Household worm bins use “Red Wiggler” worms. Red Wigglers are a European species of worm and are not native to Canada. Digging up worms from your garden may not provide the right species. Native species of worms may not like your worm bin and may try to escape.

It is recommended that you buy Red Wigglers or get Red Wigglers from someone who is already worm composting.

A quarter pound of Red Wiggler worms (a handful) should be enough to start a worm bin. A worm will eat its body weight in two days and can breed every few weeks.

Feeding Your Worms

Red Wiggler worms feed on rotten vegetation. A list of what you can feed them is listed to the right. Here are some tips:

- Bury food waste under your bedding. This will reduce smells and flies.
- Put your vegetable and fruit scraps in the freezer. This will eliminate any smells while you collect material between feedings. It will also help break down the waste and kill fruit fly eggs.
- Don't overfeed! These are living organisms not a garbage can! If you notice problems, especially when you start, be prepared to stop feeding for a while until the worms catch up.
- Chop up food. Small bits compost faster.
- Be careful composting too much of one thing (canning waste, culled fruit)!



Food (green material)

Freeze and chop when possible. Add a mixture of items. Just like humans, worms prefer a variety of food types rather than the same thing everyday.

- ✓ Vegetables and fruit - chop up for faster composting! Very little citrus!
- ✓ Coffee grounds and tea leaves - filters and tea bags can be included
- ✓ Eggshells - rinse and crush
- ✓ Plant trimmings - green leaves, old flowers, end-of-season greenery.



Bedding (brown material)

When available, use a mixture of bedding to provide more nutrients creating better compost.

- ✓ Dry brown leaves
- ✓ Newspaper - tear into strips (newspaper inks from vegetables. Avoid office paper)
- ✓ Brown paper bags - shred
- ✓ Grass clippings (preferably dry)
- ✓ Straw - chopped
- ✓ Finished outdoor compost

Materials You Should Not Add

Composting these items can lead to problems!

- ✗ Dairy - smelly
- ✗ Fish, meat, bones - smelly
- ✗ Grease - can kill or smother worms
- ✗ Cooked food, bread, pasta - smelly
- ✗ Pet poo - can spread disease, very smelly
- ✗ Citrus fruit can be too acidic (burn worms) and may attract flies.
- ✗ Office paper - chemical printer ink poisonous

Solving common problems

Unpleasant odour

<u>Potential Cause</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Too much food	Stop adding food, cover food with bedding, add more bedding
Too moist	Add dry newspaper, check water draining
Too many acidic foods (citrus)	Cut back on acidic foods.

Fruit flies

<u>Potential Cause</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Food left exposed	Bury food under bedding. Screen bin or air holes to block flies.
Too much food	Don't overload bin.
Too much fresh fruit	Freeze your fruit before placing in compost bin to kill fly eggs. Add less fruit waste.

Excessive Mold (some mold is OK!)

<u>Potential Cause</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Mold established in bedding layer	Break bedding layer apart to destroy mold. Add dry newspaper to remove moisture.
Too much acidic food (citrus, coffee)	Cut back on acidic foods. Add dolomite or ground eggshells.
Too much food	Stop adding food

How to use your compost

Remove dark crumbly worm castings on regular basis. Pick out any unfinished materials or worms and put back in bin.

Fertilizer

- Crumble a layer on top of plants to allow for slow release of nutrients.
- Combine 10% compost in garden plugs and plantings for slow release food.
- Add up to 30% sifted compost to soil and vermiculite to make a rich potting soil.



Worm Tea

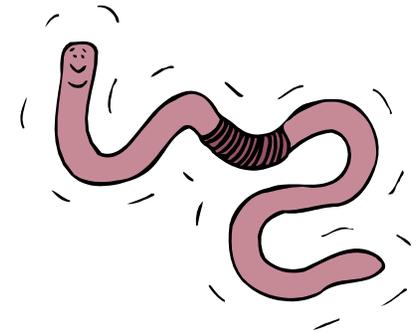
- Dilute liquid from bottom of worm bin 1 part to 10 parts water. Fertilize your plants.
- Make worm tea with finished compost. Amber worm tea is great for gardens and trees. Search online for various "recipes".

Further Questions or Would Like a Worm Bin Class?

RDOS Solid Waste Department
 Telephone: 250-490-4129
 Toll Free: 1-877-610-3737 ext. 4129
info@rdos.bc.ca

Public Works

Indoor Worm Composting



Guide to preparing and managing worm compost bins.