

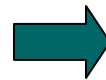


## “VermiComposting”

Vermicomposting is a great form of recycling! It is the process of saving and using ordinary kitchen waste that otherwise may be thrown into the garbage and end up in the landfill. Vermicomposting utilizes red wiggler earth worms and kitchen waste scraps to produce a beautiful organic “plant food” that can be used in your vegetable garden or native landscaping beds. Not only does this style of composting save space in your household garbage can, it is also a great way to save money on fertilizer while providing a chemical free solution for your yard and garden. Because the end result, called “castings” is organic, it is safe to use for growing consumable plants, and it will help protect our valuable soil and water resources. Save money and the environment! Sounds like a good plan, and this is how you do it.

- **Step 1**

Choose a simple container that is longer than it is deep, and one that is not clear. Worms like to be in the dark and avoid sunlight because they are made of 90% water. These types of bins work well for folks who may not have a big yard or live in an apartment.



- **Step 2**

The first element of making a successful vermicomposter, and to maintain healthy worms is to make sure your bin has good air flow. Start by drilling small holes in the lid, the upper areas of the sides, and holes in the bottom. Be sure to use a small drill bit so the worms will not escape. A good rule of thumb is to make a hole every inch across the span of the top and bottom in both directions. Three rows @ 1” on the upper sides



- **Step 3**

The second element that is important to the worms, and allows them to produce casting is “bedding”. Once again, we can recycle by using shredded paper. This example is shredded office documents, but you can easily use newspapers or even junk mail. Try to avoid using magazines or paper with a lot of photos on it. The goal is to lay down a good layer of paper to start the worms out on the process of consumption. Believe it or not, in addition to eating the food scraps, the worms will eat the paper as well.



- **Step 4**

The third important “ingredient” for our vermicompost is moisture or water. Prepare a small tray of water and submerge the paper shredding until it is completely water soaked. Grab a handful of soaked paper and squeeze the water out of it. Repeat this process until you have enough damp paper to lay a two inch layer in the bottom of your container. Be sure to place your container on some type of tray to catch any liquid that may drain out the bottom holes.



**\*\*Before proceeding to step 5, make sure that you have calculated the amount of food scraps your family produces on a weekly basis. An approximate formula for the amount of worms need is: 1000 worms per two pounds of food scrapes produced weekly.**

- **Step 5**

After acquiring your “red-wiggler or night crawler” worms (mail order, internet, or bait shops), remove the worms and any casting that came with them and place both on one side of the container. The worms will travel into the paper to avoid the sunlight. Usually there are about 1000 or so worms in a 2 pound purchase.

- **Step 7**

The last and most important element of the composter is food scraps. This “kitchen waste” such as apple cores, carrot tops, and coffee grounds is what the worms eat and subsequently produce the casting. If you are starting small, it is very import to not “overload” the bin with too much food. Start off by placing about a pound of scrapes over the worms on the one side. It may take a while to gauge how often to apply your food scraps. If your family produces a lot of food scrapes everyday, consider starting a much larger bin, or a different type of composter in addition to your small bin.

- **Step 8**

The final step is to cover the food scraps with **dry** shredded paper, and put the lid back on the top. Red wigglers and night crawlers are “surface” dwellers and consume vegetable matter on or near the surface. As the worms consume the scrapes, introduce more food scraps adjacent to the finished casting and place new dry bedding on top. You will continue this process until the container is full of casting. At this time, you can harvest the casting by hand separating the worms and use the casting in your garden or plant containers. For larger scale vermicomposting, consider using a vertical or horizontal continuous flow bin design.

