

## Worm Farming



### Did you know?

Over half of what is thrown into the general waste wheelie bins is organic materials such as food scraps and garden waste. These are then buried in landfill and contribute to the production of greenhouse gases and other pollutants to the environment. Not to mention unnecessarily taking up a huge amount of limited landfill space!

### Worm Farms

Worm farms are a great way to recycle organic materials in tubs or bins that contain specialised composting earthworms. The worms convert the organic materials into worm castings (vermicasting) and worm leachate (vermiliquid) that can be used as nutrient rich organic fertilisers and soil conditioners.



### The Wonder of Worms

- Worms can eat about half their body weight in a day and live on average for 2-3 years
- Worms can double their population every two to three months
- Composting worms naturally live in the top layer of the forest floor and are smaller and thinner than soil earthworms
- Some common composting worms are the Red Wigglers, Indian Blues, Tiger worms and African Night Crawlers
- Worm castings are a nutrient rich solid that can be used as soil conditioner or fertiliser

- Worm leachate is a valuable liquid fertiliser full of nutrients. Dilute this liquid by at least 1:10 parts water and spray or water over the soil around fruit trees, vegetables, ornamentals and pot plants

### Worm Farming Tips

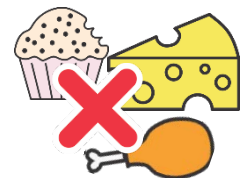
- When first setting up your worm farm, let the worms settle into the worm bedding for 1-2 weeks before feeding them
- Only feed them a handful of food at a time and chop it up to help them eat quicker
- Cover the food with damp materials to keep your worm farm dark and cool e.g. newspaper, cardboard, an old pillow case, towel, blanket made from natural fibres (cotton, wool, hemp or silk)
- Always leave the worm farm tap on with a bottle or container to collect the worm leachate

### Worm menu

- ✓ Fruit and vegetable scraps
- ✓ Tea bags, coffee grounds
- ✓ Crushed eggshells
- ✓ Shredded paper and cardboard
- ✓ Leaf litter and garden clippings
- ✓ Compost and plant fed animal manures



- ✗ Meat and dairy products
- ✗ Oily foods
- ✗ Sweet bakery and sugary foods
- ✗ Acidic citrus, onion and garlic



### Where do I get composting worms?

We recommend purchasing 1,000 worms in bedding from a local worm farmer or community garden. Have a look on the internet or the yellow pages to find one local to you.



### Let's set up a worm farm!



1. Put in shady spot



2. Turn tap on and place container



3. Add cardboard to line the tray



4. Add worms and bedding



5. Add a handful of cut up food



6. Add a handful of shredded paper



7. Add a hessian blanket on top



8. Add moisture

### Harvesting castings

When the working tray is almost full of castings, take an empty tray, fill with fresh bedding and food and place above the working tray. Over time the worms will mostly move up to the new tray for food. Take out the old tray and spread the castings onto your garden.

### Having trouble?

#### Slow?

- ✗ Food is too big
- ✗ It's winter
- ✓ Cut the food up into small pieces
- ✓ Worms are naturally slower in the cooler months, so feed them less

#### Smelly?

- ✗ Too much food
- ✗ Too wet
- ✓ Feed worms a handful of food at a time, only feed more once they have almost finished
- ✓ Leave tap on, add shredded paper

#### Unwelcome visitors?

- ✗ Exposed food
- ✗ Wrong food
- ✓ Cover food with a damp hessian bag or newspaper
- ✓ No dairy, meat or grain products

#### Worms are dying?

- ✗ Too warm
- ✗ Too wet
- ✗ Wrong food
- ✗ Too acidic
- ✓ Keep bedding damp
- ✓ Make sure worm farm is in a shady position (protected from sun and rain)
- ✓ Add shredded paper to soak up moisture
- ✓ Remove any breads, meat, grains or dairy
- ✓ Remove any citrus products