



Problems?

Problem	Cause	Solution
Odor	Too much food	Don't feed for two weeks.
	Not enough air	Add some dry bedding to soak up moisture. Drill more ventilation holes.
	Too moist	Leave lid off for short periods of time.
Fruit flies	Food left exposed	Freeze (or microwave) fruit and vegetable scraps before adding to bin to reduce fruit fly larva. Bury food in bedding.
	Too much food	Don't feed for two weeks.
Bedding is dry	New bedding is not moist enough	Use spray bottle with water to re-moisten bedding. Use more "wet" foods to feed worms.
	Using food that is too dry	Use more "wet" foods to feed worms.
No bedding is left	Worms are working faster than you are	Harvest the bin by removing the castings. Add more bedding and keep the worms working.
Worms dying or trying to escape	Not enough air	Drill more ventilation holes. Leave lid off for short periods of time.
	Feeding the wrong food	Make sure you are feeding worms foods from the acceptable list only.



How to Use Your Compost

- **Enrich potting soil.** Mix worm castings with soil at a 1:3 ratio.
- **Top dress houseplants.** Sprinkle ¼ inch of castings onto soil every six to eight weeks.
- **Give seedlings a boost.** Throw a handful of castings into the hole when you transplant.
- **Revitalize mature shrubs, ornamentals and fruit trees.** Spread 2 to 3 inches of castings from plant base to drip line and water in.
- **Green your lawn.** Water the lawn, broadcast worm castings generously and re-water the lawn.
- **Brew a nourishing tea.** Mix 10 parts water with 1 part worm castings. Spray your plants with a potent mix of microbes and micronutrients every time you water.

5 Great Reasons to Compost with Worms

- **Reduce your garbage.** Composted kitchen scraps reduce the amount of garbage going to the landfills.
- **Improve your soil.** Worm compost is full of valuable nutrients that help improve garden soil.
- **Conserve water.** Compost spread around landscape and plants helps soil retain moisture and reduces watering needs.
- **Clean the air.** Less garbage means fewer truckloads to the landfill and reduced air pollution from truck and landfill emissions.
- **It's easy.** Homeowners, apartment dwellers, office workers and students can compost year-round, indoors or out.

Questions?

Contact: Sustainability & Environmental Services (972) 769-4130

Visit: www.livegreeninplano.com

Enroll: Schedules and registration at www.livegreeninplano.com

Read: "Worms Eat My Garbage" by Mary Appelhof. Flower Press, Kalamazoo. 1997



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Food Composting Made Easy





Getting Started

You will need:

- **Worm bin**
Select a bin 8 to 12 inches deep. Plastic storage containers with lids work well.
- **Airflow**
Drill 10 to 20 air holes (about ¼ inch in diameter) in the lid or just below the lid on the sides of the container.
- **Bedding**
Damp, shredded newspaper and something for grit (soil, sand or crushed eggshells) is ideal.
- **Location**
Keep your worm bin where it is convenient to use: in the kitchen, garage, shed or balcony. Keep it out of hot sun and excessive temperatures. Worms prefer 50 F to 80 F.
- **Worms**
Red wigglers (*Eisenia foetida*) or brandling worms are well suited for indoor worm composting. For local sources of worms, go to www.livegreeninplano.com.

Composting with Worms: 7 Easy Steps

- 1 **Shred** newspaper for bedding. Moisten with water. Wring out until it is the consistency of a damp sponge.
- 2 **Add** damp bedding to your worm bin. Be sure it is at least half full.
- 3 **Sprinkle** in a handful of soil, sand or crushed eggshells for grit for the worms.
- 4 **Add** the worms. Red wigglers work best.
- 5 **Feed** your worms once a week. Pull aside some of the bedding, drop in the food scraps and cover the scraps with bedding.
- 6 **Bury** successive feedings in different locations in the bin.
- 7 **Harvest** your worm compost in one to three months.



What to Compost

Kitchen scraps	Vegetable peelings and rotting fruit. Cut into small pieces for faster composting. NOTE: No salad dressing.
Used coffee grounds and tea leaves	Worms love the coffee filters and tea bags, too!
Eggshells	Rinse and crush. It's a good source of grit and calcium.
Cooked rice, grains or pasta	Rinse off sauces before using.

What NOT to Compost

Dairy products, fish, meat, bones, fats, grease or oils	Worms can't eat or digest these foods, and often die from ingesting them. These items also create odors and can invite unwanted pests.
Citrus	Too acidic
Twigs or weeds	Difficult for worms to digest. Weed seeds often remain in the compost.
Dog or cat feces	Pathogens may persist in the finished compost.



Harvesting Your Compost

After three to six months, there will be little or no bedding visible. The bin contents will be brown and look like soil. It's time to harvest. Choose from one of these methods:

One Side to the Other

- Push all of the bin content to one side of the bin.
- Place fresh bedding in the empty space.
- Bury fresh food in the new bedding.
- Harvest compost after worms have migrated to the new bedding.

Into the Garden

- Remove a third to half of the bin content, worms and all.
- Add to the garden soil.
- Add fresh bedding and food to your bin.

Into the Sunlight

- Spread a plastic sheet under a bright light or outside in the sun.
- Dump contents of worm bin into small piles.
- Worms will crawl to the bottom of each pile.
- Harvest the castings from the top of each pile.
- Return the worms to the bin.