

# WORM FARMING

## WHY RECYCLE ORGANICS?

When organic material is compacted and buried in landfill, it breaks down anaerobically (without oxygen) and in doing so, produces large quantities of methane, a greenhouse gas 24 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

By diverting food and garden waste from landfill and feeding it to a worm farm, excessive methane production is avoided and what was once 'waste' becomes a valuable resource - organic fertiliser.

## WHAT IS WORM FARMING?

Worm farming: utilising a community of compost worms to help break down and recycle organic waste.



## WHAT DO WORMS PRODUCE?

**Worm leachate:** (liquid run-off) full of nutrients, which will drain to the bottom and can then be captured from the tap or hole in the worm farm. Worm leachate is very strong, and must be diluted before it is used on the garden (approximately 1 part leachate to 10 parts water, or until the colour of light tea).

**Castings:** worm faeces (soil-like appearance) can also be used as fertiliser and spread straight onto the garden. By feeding one side (or the level above, for multi-level stackable worm farms) of your worm farm, the worms will move to the area with food, allowing you to collect the castings left behind.

## HOW DOES MY GARDEN BENEFIT FROM USING WORM PRODUCTS?

Fertiliser produced by worms can:

- Improve soil structure and water retention
- Encourage microorganisms into your garden
- Produce healthier and more resilient plants
- It's free and completely organic!

## BUILDING A WORM FARM

A worm farm can be made from just about anything - an old fridge on its side, bathtub, polystyrene box or you can buy a worm farm from a hardware store. See what's lying around the house or visit the Bowerbird Shop to source some materials to upcycle.

Composting worms are best purchased from local breeders in terms of value for money, but can also be purchased from some hardware stores. Garden earthworms are not suitable for worm farms.

1. Line the container with a layer of mesh or large pebbles for drainage, ensuring there is a tap or hole for liquids to be collected (skip this step for store-bought worm farms - they will have a drainage layer and tap).
2. Add a layer of breathable fabric such as shadecloth or geotextiles to prevent the worms falling into the drainage layer.
3. Spread soaked coconut fibre, garden compost or shredded newspaper in the container to create bedding for the worms.
4. Add the compost worms!
5. Cover with damp newspaper, hessian or shadecloth to maintain a constant temperature.
6. Store the worm farm somewhere sheltered and cool, where the temperature remains constant. Beware of the winter frost or searing summer heat!
7. Leave for around a week to allow the worms to settle before feeding them.



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## WHAT DO I FEED MY WORMS?

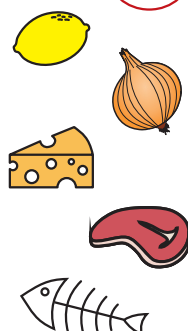


### Worms like to eat:

- Most fruit scraps
- Most vegetable scraps
- Small amounts of newspaper/paper
- Small amounts of leaves
- Vacuum cleaner dust
- Hair
- Eggshells
- Tea bags (no staple)
- Coffee grounds
- Grass



### Do NOT feed worms:



- Citrus fruits (such as lemons and oranges)
- Onion and garlic
- Chilli
- Dairy products
- Very oily foods
- Meat and seafood
- Grain products
- Animal droppings
- Eucalyptus leaves

## WORM FARM TIPS

- Your worm farm, like a compost, should be as moist as a wrung out sponge
- Worms slow down and eat less in winter
- Cut food into small pieces - that way they are quicker and easier to digest
- Don't feed worms every day - allow time for worms to consume scraps
- Eggshells (no more than half a cup each month) are very beneficial in a worm farm - they provide calcium which reduces acidity, aid the worms' digestion and can even encourage worms to lay more eggs!



## TROUBLESHOOTING

### Issue

Smelly/lots of vinegar flies

Too dry

Too wet

Vermin

Not eating food quick enough



### Solution

Sprinkle dolomite, lime or wood ash

Add water or wet food scraps

Mix through dry leaves, grass or torn up newspaper

Remove breads, grains, meat or dairy products

Stop feeding until worms have 'caught up'. Worms eat less in winter