

## Using Worms to Compost



## Why Compost?



- Dispose of waste without burdening the water treatment facility or landfill.
- Return badly needed organic material to the soil.
- For every minute a garbage disposal is turned on, 4 gallons of water is used.

## Why Compost With Worms?

- Can be done indoors or outdoors, which allows for year round composting.
- Give apartment dwellers a way to compost.
- The end product is an extremely rich compost that can be used to nourish your plants.

## Choose a Bin



- Provide one square foot of surface area per pound of food waste produced each week.

## Pick a Place

- Locate your bin where it will not freeze or overheat in a pantry, kitchen corner, laundry room, garage, basement, patio, deck, or in your garden.
- Worms can tolerate temperature between 40 and 85 F.

## Prepare the Bedding

- Bedding can be shredded paper (not glossy), shredded cardboard, leaves, etc.
- Bedding should have 75% water content by weight.
- To get this weigh your dry bedding and add 3X the water.
- Add 1 cup of sand to the mix to provide for the worms crop.

## Add Worms!



- *Eisenia foetida* or Red Wiggler
- For one pound of food waste per day, use two pounds of worms.
- This is a 2/1 worm to food waste per day ratio.

## Worm Suppliers

### Oasis Worm Farms

Norma Minto  
 P.O. Box 15  
 W. Union, IL 62477  
 Tel: 217-279-3460  
 Fax: 217-279-3680  
[oasiswormfarm@marshallonline.com](mailto:oasiswormfarm@marshallonline.com)  
 Redworms for Vermicomposting: 1 lb @ \$15.00 plus shipping.  
 Bulk rates available.. please call for quote.

## What can I feed my worms?

### Do feed your worms...

- All fruit & vegetable trimmings
- Coffee grounds & filters
- Tea bags
- Citrus rinds
- Rinsed-out, crushed eggshells
- Used paper towels
- Soft green plant trimmings

### Don't feed your worms...

- Meat, bones or fish
- Dairy products or grease
- Grains, beans or breads
- Dog, cat or bird feces
- Sawdust from ply- wood/treated wood
- Woody prunings (in closed-air systems, worm bins, or underground)

## Maintaining Your Bin

- Maintain the correct ratio of surface area to worms to food scraps.
- Add more bedding as needed
- Keep a consistent moisture level.
- Harvest your compost every 3 to 6 months.

## Harvesting Your Compost

### Dump and sort

- Dump contents out of bin.
- Place light over pile. This makes the worms migrate to bottom.
- Take castings from top as worms leave.

## Harvesting Your Compost

### In-bin separation

- Push contents of bin to one side.
- Fill up empty side with fresh bedding.
- Only put food scraps on the fresh side.
- As food is eaten on old side worms will migrate to fresher side, separating by themselves.

## Harvesting Your Compost

Who gives a darn.

- Take half of your bin and dump it into the garden worms and all.
- Use the leftover worms to repopulate.

**\*\*Worms that you put into your garden will not survive through the winter**

## Vermicompost Uses

- Mix it with your potting soil and use with house plants and patio containers
- Excellent mulch; spread a layer on top of the soil.
- Finely sprinkled on your lawn as a conditioner.
- See handout for detailed instructions.

## Problems

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Odor	Exposed food	Cover food scraps with bedding
	Too much moisture	Add dry bedding; reduce amount of food placed in bin.
	Not enough oxygen	Add dry bedding; mix bin contents daily.
	Food in bin is naturally odorous	Don't feed meat, bones, dairy, oily products to the bin.

## Problems continued

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Worm Death	Bin is too wet or dry	Add dry bedding if too wet and moisten bedding if dry
	Not enough food	Add food
	Not enough oxygen	Mix bin contents, be sure bin is ventilated.
	Bin is too hot or cold	Try to keep bin at 50 – 80 F
	Overabundance of mites	Remove food covered in mites.

## Problems continued

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Fruit Flies	Exposed Food	Bury food under bedding; cover the contents with a dry sheet of bedding.
	Too much moisture	Avoid overfeeding; add dry bedding.
	Fruit fly eggs in food scraps	wash all fruits and peels—even those you remove, such as bananas and citrus—to remove any fruit fly eggs

## THANKS FOR COMING!