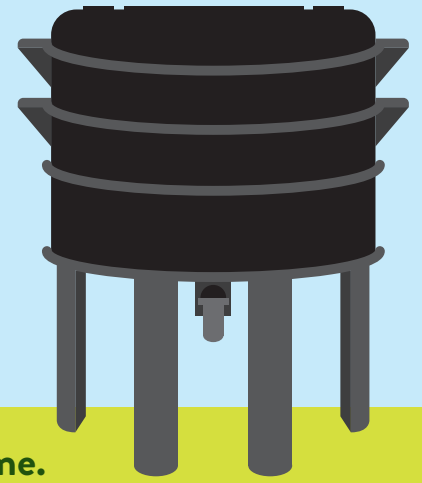


# WORM FARM

## QUICK START GUIDE



A worm farm helps you compost and recycle food waste at home.

After worms have digested their food, they release waste (worm poo) called worm castings. Worm castings are regarded as one of the richest natural fertilisers and contain more nutrients and bacteria than any other fertiliser. They are also a great soil conditioner improving soil structure, water retention and drainage.

**Worm farming does come with its own challenges. It's a relationship that requires care and attention.**

These instructions are based on a three-tier worm farm which includes two working trays.

### 1 Setting up your worm farm

- **Find a cool shady site** sheltered from the sun- Carports or sheltered porches are ideal, and keep it away from tin fences.
- **Make your worms a home** - Place some bedding into your first working tray, e.g. hay, coconut fibre, shredded cardboard, paper, wood chips or leaves.
- **Bedding should be damp and porous** - Squeeze the worm bedding in your hand and check whether any water drips out. The bedding material should feel like a damp sponge, moist but not dripping.
- **Add worms** - 1000 (250g) is fine; 2000 is even better.
- **Feed them** - Add a mix of food scraps and bedding material, ideally every 1-2 days. Cut it up so no pieces are bigger than a golf ball. (See back page for what to feed them).
- **Start small and build it up** - Worms can eat their own weight each day so 250g of worms need about 200g of food. Slowly increase this over the first 6 months and your population should grow to match.
- **Leave the tap open** - Collect the worm juice in a bucket or watering can ready to be made into tea.

### 2 Keeping your worms happy

- **Don't overfeed them** - as this can cause a lot of issues for the balance of the habitat.
- **Keep them in the dark** - Worms become paralyzed if exposed to light for too long, so cover food scraps with a damp carpet, hessian bag, newspaper or cardboard to provide a moist dark environment.
- **Regulate the temperature in your worm tray** - Compost worms can tolerate a wide temperature range, but they like the same temperatures as humans, between 15° - 30° Celsius. Outside of this they will eat less, reproduce less and in extremes die off.

### 3 Preparing for harvest

- **When your first tray of worms is full**, it's time to add another on top. Make it inviting with fresh bedding and food.
- **The worms will then start to move** into the upper tray and feed.

### 4 Harvest time (about 3-6 months later)

- **Remove the bottom working tray.**
- **Check if it's ready** - It should look like a dark compost, it might still have a few worms in.
- **Time to use those castings!**
- **Clean and store tray** - until the worms are ready to move again.

## WORM TEA:



To make worm tea the collected worm juice should be diluted to the colour of weak black tea (1:10). Apply 2-4 weeks around plant roots as a nutritious fertiliser. **The worm juice should be a light amber liquid** and is created through the gut of healthy worms.

You need to make sure you don't have worm leachate which is dark and foul smelling as it contains bacteria that is not safe and comes from the gut of unhealthy worms. It's a sign that the eco-system is out of balance - they might need less food or more bedding.

# WHAT TO FEED THE WORMS

## Feed your worms...



CHOPPED FRUIT & VEGGIE SCRAPS



SHREDDED PAPER & CARDBOARD



COTTON RAGS



HAIR & NAIL CLIPPINGS



LEAVES



COFFEE GROUNDS & TEA LEAVES

## Don't feed them...



MEATS, BONES, FAT AND ANYTHING OILY OR GREASY – BUT NATURAL OILS (E.G. AVOCADO) ARE FINE



DAIRY PRODUCTS



CITRUS FOODS LIKE LEMONS, LIMES & ORANGES



ONIONS AND GARLIC – ALTHOUGH ONION SKINS ARE OK IN MODERATION



SPICY FOODS SUCH AS HOT PEPPERS

# WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

PROBLEM	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Rotting contents	Too much for population, wrong food, pieces too big	Feed less, check items going in, and cut them up smaller.
Fruit/vinegar flies around farm or small white bugs	Too acidic	Cover food with damp paper and add lime to increase pH.
Worms climbing up the sides/worms very fat and pale	Too wet	Add paper products and dry leaves gently fork holes in the working layer.
Ants	Too dry or acidic	Add water/lime. If your worm farm is on legs, place each leg in a container of water to stop them getting in.

# NEED MORE INFO?

The Environment Centre is here to help with your worm farm questions and problems. But for more online inspiration these are a great place to start:

Compost Collective - [www.compostcollective.org.nz](http://www.compostcollective.org.nz)

Worm Farm Guru - [www.wormfarmguru.com/how-to-start-a-worm-farm](http://www.wormfarmguru.com/how-to-start-a-worm-farm)

Huw Richards YouTube Channel - [www.youtube.com/user/HuwsNursery](http://www.youtube.com/user/HuwsNursery)