

The worms

Brown-nose worms or redworms work best in containers; don't use night crawlers or other large, soil-burrowing worms. Composting worms are available from various stores and catalogs that sell garden soils and supplies.

The materials

- ✎ *Paper:* Paper serves as a “bedding” for the worms to live in. The worms consume it along with the other materials. You can use any kind of paper, but worms will consume newspapers, cardboard, paper towels, and other coarse papers faster than fine printing and writing papers.
- ✎ *Food Scraps:* Almost any fruit, grain, or vegetable material other than oil is good for worm composting. Egg shells, coffee grounds, and tea bags are also fine.
- ✎ *Other Materials:* Add a little soil or fine sand to provide grit. Leaves and other yard trimmings can be used as part of the bedding. Livestock manure is excellent food for worms in outdoor containers.

Getting started

- ✎ Tear newspaper or cardboard into strips. Dip it in water, and let it drain.
- ✎ Add this paper bedding to a bin until it is 1/3 full. Mix in a little soil or fine sand.
- ✎ Start with a pound of worms for each pound of food scraps you plan to compost each week. For example, start with 2 pounds of worms if you will compost 2 pounds of food scraps per week. Unless you start composting more food scraps, you should never need to add any more worms.
- ✎ Add a 1/2-inch or smaller layer of food scraps on top, mix it lightly into the top 2 inches of bedding, and cover everything with at least 1 inch of shredded paper. Don't leave any food scraps at the surface. Wait two days or longer, and then repeat these steps as materials are available.

Harvesting

- ✎ When a worm bin is full, scoop out any undigested food scraps and the material that contains the most worms – usually the top 3 to 4 inches of the material. Use the rest as compost. Put the worm-rich material back into the bin. Mix it with an equal amount of fresh bedding, and cover with 1 inch of shredded paper.
- ✎ To recover more worms from the compost, spread it thinly on a tarp in sunlight, leaving a few small mounds. The worms will gather in mounds as the material dries. Be careful, because the heat and rapid drying can kill them. Another method is to sift the compost gently over a fine-mesh wire screen and save the worms that don't go through it.

[Information used in this handout was developed by:
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY]

HOME COMPOSTING PLASTIC WORM BIN



For more information, please contact
Keep Brownwood Beautiful
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What

is Worm Composting?

Worm composting involves using worms to turn food scraps, newspapers, and cardboard into rich compost, that can be added to potted plants, lawns or gardens. It is convenient, and you can do it indoors (even in apartments) or outdoors. Some people who make leaf compost in their backyards also use worms to compost their food scraps and paper.

Why compost with worms?

Worm composting has several advantages over composting in a pile. It takes less space. You can do it in 10-gallon containers. It is less work. You don't have to build big piles and turn them. Even if you have limited physical abilities, you can do worm composting. It is a faster way to compost paper. It is not easy to compost paper in a compost pile. It creates a richer soil. Your plants will get more nutrients and will get them faster.

Making a Home Worm Composting Bin

Materials:

One plastic storage container with a tight fitting lid 12"-18" tall, 12"x24" base

Tools:

Power drill with " bit or a utility knife

Assembly:

For indoor use, drill several holes for ventilation about halfway up the sides of the bin. For outdoor use, holes can be drilled in the bottom for ventilation and drainage. To reduce fly infestation, keep holes small.

Worm Bin plans by

Alameda County Waste Management Authority &
Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board