

Vermicompost Resource Sheet

Feeding

Red wigglers like a mixture of 50% kitchen scraps, 50% bedding and a small amount of grit or sand. 1lbs of worms needs ½lbs of food per day.



NWT SCIENCE FOCUS

Topics

- Waste

Objective

- Start a vermi-compost bin

Kitchen Scraps Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Fruit and vegetable trimmings.
- Coffee grounds and filters.
- Non-plastic tea bags (remove any strings and staples)
- Grains: rice, pasta, bread, cereal, crackers, etc.

Don'ts

- Avoid too much citrus and onions.
- No dairy, eggs, meat and processed or salty foods.

Bedding Options

- Shredded paper, newspaper, magazines
- Cardboard (breakdown and shred into thin strips)
- Cotton, wool or other natural fibre lint (no synthetic fibres such as polyester, nylon, fleece)
- Kleenex and napkins
- Peanut shells
- Dead flowers
- Leaves (no pine or spruce needles)
- Plant trimmings
- Straw
- Peat moss
- Coir- coconut fibres



Grit options

- Crushed eggshells
- Sand
- Sandy soil

Moisture and Air

Ensure that the worm's bedding remains moist, like a worn-out sponge. If the bedding gets too dry, the worms will start to leave the bin in search of moisture. If it is too wet, the worms can drown. To test the moisture, pick up a handful of bedding and squeeze. Just a few drops of water should come out. Bedding should not be too compacted and have lots of air pockets. If the bedding is compacted, gently stir to add space and air. If the bedding is too wet allow it to dry out after stirring.

Temperature and Sunlight

Red wigglers do best in temperatures between 15 and 26 degrees Celsius and will slow down if temperatures are colder or warmer than this. Red wigglers will not survive freezing or very hot temperatures. Do not expose worms to direct sunlight. Worms like cool, dark places.

Odour

The vermicompost bin should smell like earth from the garden. If it has a strong odour, there could be too much moisture or too much food. Stop feeding and gently stir in new dry bedding.

Harvesting

When you are ready to harvest the worm castings (the soil-like material made from the worms), move any remaining food scraps over to one side of the bin with the new food. In a few days, the worms will move to the side of the bin with the food. You can then remove the castings from the bin.

Long-term Care

- A population of red wigglers will double about every three months. One pound of red wigglers is equal to about one thousand worms. From time to time, the population will need to be divided into a new bin or given away to a friend.
- Red wigglers can survive for up to a month without any direct care, as long as they have food and moist bedding.

Using Compost and Benefits

- You can use the worm castings in outdoor or indoor gardens and houseplants. Worm castings can be mixed in garden soil when transplanting or sprinkled on top of the soil around plants or seedlings and gently raked in.
- Worm castings contain lots of nutrients that improve soil and help plants fight off pests and prevent plant diseases. Plants grown with worm casting have stronger roots and produce fruits and vegetables that taste better.
- Vermicomposting reduces garbage that would otherwise end up at the dump! Our food scraps can go back to the earth, completing the food cycle, by being composted.

