How to Start Vermicomposting

Thanks for your interest in Vermicomposting, which is a method of composting extra food scraps at home using worms! Worms are a fun way to transform organic matter that would normally end up in landfills into delicious & nutritious fertilizer for your garden! If you and your child have any interest in making your own worm bin here is an easy, inexpensive DIY that you can do at home.

STEP 1: Get started with a 5 to 20-gallon opaque plastic storage tub with a lid. Any big box hardware store has lots of options. Use drill bit the size of a pencil tip to make holes all around the top of the sides of the tub. Do not put holes in the lid. They let in too much light and encourage excessive evaporation.

STEP 2: Once your bin is prepped, get the bedding ready. You can use newspaper (avoid the glossy inserts), office paper, or printer paper. Shred the paper by tearing it into strips or running it through a shredder. This shredded paper makes a great addition to either a worm bin or compost pile. You can also add some dirt to your compost bin. I like to use Coconut Coir which can also be purchased at your local nursery, or online. **DO NOT USE POTTING SOIL. EVEN ORGANIC POTTING SOIL HAS CHEMICALS THAT CAN HURT THE WORMS.** Next, make sure the bedding is moist. Worms breathe by exchanging gasses through their moist skin, so spritz the bedding with a mister full of water. It should be damp like a wrung-out sponge but not soaking. Fill your empty bin about 1/3 full of loose bedding.

STEP 3: Then, add some food scraps. Vegetable peelings, fruit, eggshells, coffee grounds, fall leaves, and moderate amounts of corrugated cardboard make good worm-composting-scraps. Add a thin layer of these ingredients on top of the bedding material, then add more damp paper bedding and toss in one or two shovels of garden soil for roughage. Top this with another layer of food scraps, and finally, finish with one more layer of bedding. In a worm bin or compost pile, layering multiple ingredients together results in faster decomposition. The bin should be about 3/4 full when you're done layering. Don't add meats, oils, or dairy, citrus or onions which can attract flies and maggots. Avoid using too much of any one ingredient to keep your bin well-balanced. Do not use manure, except rabbit manure.

STEP 4: Add the worms! I recommend using Red Wiggler worms that I get online about 500 worms to start. They will multiply over time.

STEP 5: Maintain your worm bin by keeping the temperature moderate somewhere between 50 - 90 degrees. Feed them a cup or two of food scrapes once a week. **YOUR BIN SHOULD NEVER SMELL. IF IT SMELLS, IT MOST LIKELY MEANS THAT YOU ARE OVERFEEDING THEM.**

STEP 6: Harvest your bin every few months when the bin gets noticeably heavier. There are lots of resources online about the best and easiest way to harvest the castings. Then use on flower beds, veggie gardens and houseplants & seed starting for an extra kick of nutrients for your plants.

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