

ARE YOUR OLD RECYCLING BINS STILL STACKED UP IN THE GARAGE?



These plastic containers make suitable bins for worm composting. Elevate the bin off the ground, add a lid and some holes for drainage and ventilation, and you have a nice, compact worm farm that will transform your kitchen scraps into a rich fertilizer that neighborhood gardeners will envy!

Consider:

You'll be diverting your kitchen scraps away from the landfill.

You'll be conserving resources by re-using the plastic containers instead of recycling them.

Worm compost is nature's way of fertilizing plants--the nutrients last up to a year in the soil, are absorbed by the plants as needed, and you don't have to worry about applying too much.

Worm compost will improve the water retention and aeration in your garden while reducing your need for chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and fungicides.



Food for Worms:

Vegetable trimmings

Fruit pulp / rinds

Egg shells

Coffee grounds

Coffee filters

Banana peels

Apple cores

Potato peels

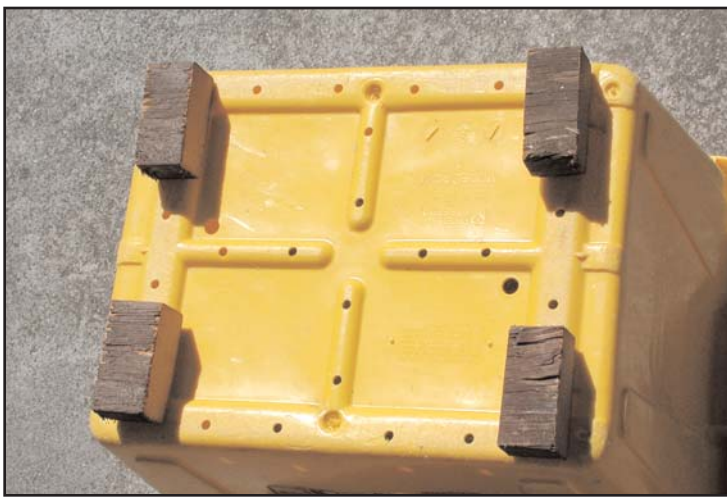
Tea bags

Don't feed your worms:

**Meats
Fat or oils**

**Dairy Products
Bones**

**Pet feces
Bread**



Scrap wood used for feet and holes for drainage

Use scrap wood and a couple screws to create feet for each corner of the bin. Another alternative is just to set the bin on top of four bricks. The idea is to elevate the bin to provide for drainage and ventilation. The liquid that will drain out of the base is called “leachate” and will stain cement, so either set the bin in the dirt or put a tray underneath to collect the leachate. The drainage holes should be no smaller than 1/4” and no bigger than 3/8”. Also drill ventilation holes about three inches below the top along each side. Two to three holes per side is adequate.



Moist, shredded newspaper makes good bedding

Compost worms, known as “Red Wigglers,” don’t live in soil. They live in damp, decaying organic matter such as piles of autumn leaves. Shredded or torn newspaper makes an excellent bedding. If you don’t have a shredder, tear off strips of paper about 1 inch wide. Submerge handfuls of the torn paper into a bucket of water and then wring it out before adding it to the bin. The dampness should be like a wrung-out sponge. Then fluff the bedding so that it’s not compressed and heavy. With your bin 3/4 full of moist, shredded paper, you’re now ready to add worms and food. Start with one pound of Red Wigglers -- within a couple months they’ll reproduce and fully populate your bin.



These bins and lids are available for only \$10 through the Home Composting Education Program

Keep a lid on the bin to help retain the moisture, to keep the bin dark (worms are sensitive to light), and to keep pests and flies away. Make sure you cover the food scraps with bedding when you feed the worms, but if you still have a problem with fruit flies, keep a small jar 1/3 full of vinegar in the bedding. The flies will be attracted to the vinegar and will drown. Also, plastic bins sometimes retain too much moisture, so if you notice the bedding is getting very wet and heavy, add more dry newspaper to absorb the excess moisture. Worms can eat half their bodyweight per day, so start feeding them 3 to 4 pounds of scraps per week. Feed more as the worm population rises.

You can find Red Wigglers at bait shops or through the Internet. One supplier is Sonoma Valley Worm Farm (800-447-6996). The price for a pound of worms usually runs about \$15 to \$20. Additional information and worm suppliers can be found online by doing a search on Google using “worm composting” or “vermicomposting.”

Santa Clara County Home Composting Education Program 408-918-4640