

Lesson #52

How to Start Your Own Worm Bin

Vermis means “worm,” and vermicomposting is composting with worms. It’s a way to use leftover food scraps and create rich soil for your garden. Composting helps our environment by keeping some garbage out of landfills. You can make a simple worm bin and start composting. Just follow these steps.

Materials:

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|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 dark 8–10 gallon plastic storage bin | a pail of water |
| 2–4 cups of soil | vegetable and fruit food scraps |
| 1 pound red wiggler worms (about 500, can be purchased online) | |
| 50 sheets of newspaper torn into half-inch strips, no colored print | |

Setting up the Bin

1. Soak the newspaper in a pail of water until it is moist but not dripping. You can add more dry newspaper if it gets too wet. Add the strips to the clean bin. Fluff it up to give the worms some air. Sprinkle the soil on top of the newspaper.
2. Add the worms.
3. Tuck the food scraps under the newspaper bedding. Make sure the food is covered. This will keep fruit flies away. Add 3 pounds of food per week for every pound of worms. Add more food as the worms reproduce. Use vegetables and fruits only. Do not use citrus fruits, meat, bones, oil, or dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt).
4. Add a sheet of dry newspaper on top of the bedding. This will keep the moisture in. Cover the bin. Leave the lid open a bit, so some air can get in.
5. Add food and wet newspaper strips once a week. Be sure to fluff the strips so the worms get air.

Harvesting the Soil

When you notice the soil building up it’s time to harvest it to use in your garden.

1. Do not add new food for 2 weeks.
2. Push all of the bin contents to one side of the bin. Put fresh bedding and food scraps on the empty side.

3. Wait 2–3 weeks. The worms will move to the side with the food scraps leaving the rich soil behind. Remove the soil, and freeze it for one week before putting it in a garden. This will keep earthworms out of places where they don't belong.
4. Finally, add the soil to a garden or house plants.

Keep feeding the worms in the bin. There will be many more worms. Give some to your friends so that they can start vermicomposting!

RI.3.4 1. Match each word with its clue.

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| _____ contents | A) gather up |
| _____ citrus fruits | B) the world around us |
| _____ harvest | C) what's inside |
| _____ environment | D) oranges, lemons, and limes |
| _____ dairy products | E) to make more |
| _____ reproduce | F) foods made from milk |

RI.3.1 2. Underline the part of the text that tells which foods should not go into a vermicomposting bin.

RI.3.1 3. List three things that worms need.

RI.3.1 4. In the text, underline the sentence that lists two reasons for vermicomposting.

RI.3.1 5. According to the text, why should you “fluff up” strips of newspaper in the bin?

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| A) to provide water | C) to move the worms |
| B) to provide air | D) to make more space |

RI.3.4 6. Write the meaning of *vermicomposting*.
