

Did you know ...

- One pound of worms can eat more than ½ their body weight in food – every day! That's over ½ pound of food per day!
- The average person in the U.S. throws away almost ½ pound of recyclable food waste – **DAILY!**
- In Orange County alone, worm composting could eliminate **millions of tons** of food waste from our landfills per year!
- Worms are extremely efficient, and can compost food waste faster than any other composting method.
- Worm composting is ideal for people with little or no yard space. Worm composting can even be done indoors.
- Worm composting in a properly built bin is virtually odorless, and will not attract flies, rodents or other pests.
- A worm composting bin is easy and inexpensive to build. All of the materials you need (except for the worms) can be found around your house or in your local store's hardware department.
- Kids LOVE things that squirm! Worm composting is a fun and informative hands-on way to teach kids about recycling, as well as science, nature and math.

Vermiculture

Vermiculture* or worm composting is a fun and easy way to recycle kitchen scraps! No more guilt about having to throw away wilted lettuce or strawberry stems.

The worms love leftover vegetables, fruit peels, cores, tea and coffee grounds and much more! In return, you get wonderful compost (worm castings) full of nutrients for your garden.

First a few facts and then some tips to make it a positive experience.

*Warning

Vermiculture can be very addicting... you may find yourself talking to your worms, naming them and preparing special food for them.



University of California
Cooperative Extension, Orange County
1045 Arlington Drive,
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Phone: 714-708-1606

Website: <http://ceorange.ucdavis.edu>



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Advice to grow by -
Ask us!

Composting with Worms



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Master Gardeners of Orange County



Gardening Questions Hotline:
Phone: 714-708-1646
Email: hotline@uccemg.com
Website: www.uccemg.com

It's so easy...

- Only a few items are needed:
 - Bin
 - Bedding
 - Red Worms
 - Kitchen scraps
- Requires very little work
- Odor free
- Takes very little space
- No turning or sweating

Worms are like Goldilocks...

They like their beds soft and they don't like it too wet or too dry; too hot or too cold; too spicy or too salty.

Do's:

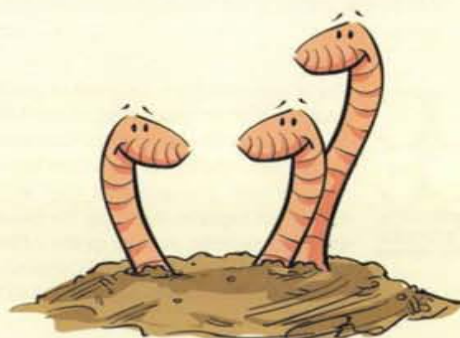
- Fruit and Vegetable scraps (cooked or uncooked). Rinse off any seasoning, sauces, dressing, or oils.
- Microwave any foods that are suspect of fruit flies or other pest contamination (this will kill any live pests or their larvae)
- Coffee, filters, tea bags (moderate amounts)
- Egg shells: rinse and microwave. Crushing them up speeds up process

Don'ts:

- No foods that contain oil, fats, vinegar, excessive salt/sodium or spices
- No dairy, fish or meat products
- No germinating seeds (tomato, cantaloupe, sprouts, etc.)
- No citrus peels, pickled foods

Environment:

- Red worms need an environment that is moderate in temperature, impenetrable to outside pests, situated away from sources of vibration and direct sun.
- Keep your worm bin inside, in an insulated garage or in a consistently shaded area.
- Do NOT expose the bin to sun... it will heat up quickly and kill the worms. Optimum worm temperature is between 68-77° F. Worms become stressed over 85° F and will not survive extended hot temperatures.
- In the winter, your worms will be less active and will eat less. Feed them only after they have eaten much of their previous meal.
- They like soft bedding: shredded brown paper, cardboard or newspaper (no color if possible). The shredded paper should be moistened to be slightly wet – like a wrung out sponge.



Troubleshooting:

- Smelly? Maybe not enough air circulation, too much water or too much food. Try taking any scraps out that look moldy and fluff up with fresh shredded paper. Empty any water out of the bottom, rinse and dry the container.
- Fruit flies: Make sure the bin lid closes tightly, and that all of the air/drainage holes are protected with fine screening, nylon mesh or landscape fabric. Cover fruit and vegetative matter with enough bedding material to thoroughly cover it or wet several sheets of newspaper and lay flat on top of the bedding.

