

The easy worm farm fix-it guide

Worm farms are easy to look after – you will only need to spend a few hours maintaining your worms. But sometimes there can be problems. Some common problems and their solutions are listed here.

My worm farm smells



Your worms may be overfed or too wet.

Fix it

- ✓ Feed your worms slowly and gradually build up the quantity.
- ✓ Make sure your worm farm is well-drained or your worms may drown.



My worms won't multiply

Worms need the right conditions in order to breed. Keep them cool (the ideal temperature is 18-25°C); moist but not too wet; away from direct light; and feed them foods that do not cause acidic conditions (fruits, grains and sugary foods can be acid-forming).



Fix it

- ✓ Keep your worm farm out of direct sunlight.
- ✓ Keep it covered and well drained.
- ✓ Add a sprinkling of wood ash, dolomite or lime every few weeks to prevent the worm farm from becoming too acidic.

Vinegar flies?
Add lime.
Too acidic?
Add paper.

Unwelcome visitors?

Ants or cockroaches may be a bit of a nuisance but don't worry – they won't harm your worms.



Fix it

- ✓ Keep a lid on your worm farm or underfelt cover over the food scraps.
- ✓ If your worm farm sits on legs, place each leg in a bowl of water.

Going on holidays?
Feed moist paper.

For more information visit

environment.nsw.gov.au
livingthing.net.au

Contact

Environment Line 131 555

Published by
Office of Environment and Heritage
Department of Premier and Cabinet
59–61 Goulburn Street, Sydney
Phone: (02) 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Fax: (02) 9995 5999
TTY: (02) 9211 4723
Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

OEH 2011/0739 ISBN 978 1 74232 226 1 September 2011



Office of
Environment
& Heritage

our environment *it's a living thing*



Easy worm farming

Create your own Eden

Why have a worm farm?

- Worm farms turn your food leftovers into rich soil-like 'castings' which are great for feeding house plants, adding to seedling mixes and potting soils or top-dressing around plants.
- The liquid produced by your worm farm is full of nutrients – dilute and use it on your pot plants.
- Worm farms can be kept outside, inside, on the balcony or in the garage and they are ideal for units.



4 easy steps to successful worm farming

1 Choose the site

Pick a well-shaded spot so that your worms don't get too hot.



2 Collect worm food

Worms like to eat vegetable and fruit peelings, pulp from the juicer, tea bags, crushed egg shells, bread and small amounts of soiled paper and cardboard (such as shredded egg cartons).

Smaller scraps are easier and quicker to digest so blend your scraps with water before feeding your worms.

Worms' least favourite foods are dairy products, butter and cheese, meat, fish, fat and bones, very oily foods and citrus, onion and garlic.



Hint Make sure your worm farm is:

- ✓ **Moist** – worms breathe through their skins which needs to be kept moist.
- ✓ **Well-drained** – worms can drown if the worm farm gets too wet.
- ✓ **Covered** – worms don't like direct light and covering your worm farm will also discourage flies and other pests.
- ✓ **Not acidic** – avoid feeding your worms acidic foods like citrus, onion and garlic.



3 Make a worm farm or bed

If you don't want to buy a worm farm you can build one with boxes or make a worm bed in your garden.

Worm farms are typically 30 cm deep, 60 cm wide and 90 cm long, have holes in the base to allow air in, have good drainage and are covered with hessian or underfelt. A base or tray underneath will catch liquid and provide good drainage that you can use on your garden.



Make some bedding from a combination of finished compost, leaves and soggy paper. The bedding should be torn or shredded to allow the worms to move easily. Make the bedding layer 10–15 cm deep.

Now add between one and two thousand worms. You can buy worms directly from commercial worm growers or through your local nursery. Spread the worms out gently on the surface and allow them to burrow down.

Start adding your kitchen scraps regularly and in small amounts by placing them in the box and covering them with bedding material or a handful of soil or compost.

Only add more food once most of the worms' previous meal has been eaten.

4 Harvest worms

Move the worm castings/ compost (vermicompost) all to one side of the worm farm and add fresh bedding to the empty side. The worms will migrate to the fresh bedding in a few days so that the valuable worm castings can be taken out and used.



Problems with your worm farm? Turn over for the easy worm farm fix-it guide >>