

Kitchen Waste Composting With Worms



Why Worms?

Worms are the animal kingdom's master composters of kitchen waste, turning it into a rich high-quality compost for your garden. In King County, it's recommended that kitchen waste be buried and covered by at least 8" of soil, or composted in a worm bin. Worms bins are an efficient and fun way to recycle food wastes into compost that can improve your garden soil.

Choose a container

Use a sturdy box (either wooden or plastic) with a tight-fitting lid to keep pests out and moisture in. A shallow box about a foot deep is best as worms live near the surface in order to breathe. You need about one square foot of surface area for each pound of kitchen waste. For outdoor bins, drill holes in the bottom for drainage. For indoor bins, drill holes on the sides and be sure liquid doesn't accumulate in the bottom. To buy a ready-made worm bin, see resources on this sheet.

Add bedding

Shredded newspaper, corrugated cardboard, coarse sawdust or dry leaves make good bedding. Moisten first by soaking; then squeeze water out and fill the container to the top. Add more bedding when the contents seem too wet, or to cover food waste if fruit flies appear.

Add worms

Red wiggler worms thrive on organic materials such as kitchen waste. Don't use earthworms or nightcrawlers as they live in soil and don't eat kitchen waste. A starter batch of a pound or two can come from a friend's worm bin, or see resources on this sheet. Worms like to stay between **59°-77° F** though they can handle temperatures

between 33°-86° F. Shelter outdoor bins from hot sun and cold nights.

Add kitchen waste

Feed your worms vegetable and fruit remains, coffee and tea grounds and filters, moldy bread, grains and cereals. Cut scraps into small (one-inch) pieces for softer digestion and faster composting. **Don't feed** them meat, dairy products, fats, oils, non-biodegradable materials or pet wastes. Within your bin, **rotate locations of food distribution**. Even distribution speeds up the composting process.

Harvest the compost

In a month or two, remove the finished castings and

change the bedding. Too many castings can be toxic to the worms. Two ways to remove compost and leave the worms:

Push the crumbly castings (compost) to one side. Place new bedding in the empty side and add new food scraps. As the worms finish in the old side, they'll move to the fresh bedding side and you can remove the finished compost.

Pile the compost in the sun. Worms don't like the light and in a few minutes will move below the surface. Scrape off the top layer. Wait 5 – 10 minutes and repeat the process until you have a pile of mostly worms that can be returned to the worm bin to get back to work.



MORE ON BACK

Additional Resources for Worm Composting

- Build your own bin www.kingcounty.gov/soils
- The Garden Hotline 206-633-0224 or email help@gardenhotline.org
- **Worm Digest.** For people in the business or who want to start www.wormdigest.org
- Gardening in Western Washington <http://gardening.wsu.edu>
- **Worms Eat My Garbage** by Mary Appelhof. Available at local bookstores and libraries.

Five Steps to: Natural Yard Care



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

Resources for Worm Bins and Worms

This list should not be construed as an endorsement.

Auburn Sports and Marine

253-833-1440

810 Auburn Way N, Auburn

[http://auburnsportsmarineinc.com/
sys-tmpl/door](http://auburnsportsmarineinc.com/sys-tmpl/door)

Occasionally stocks worms. Call first.

Minter's Earlington Greenhouse

425-255-7744

13043 Renton Ave S, Renton

www.mintersnursery.com

Worms available mid-March

Sky Nursery

206-546-4851

18528 Aurora Ave N, Shoreline

www.skynursery.com

Worms, worm bins and accessories.

Carries most composting items.

Stone Way Hardware

206-545-6910

4318 Stone Way N, Seattle

Worms. Will ship via mail/UPS.

The Red Worm Gals

Bellevue, WA

206-501-8844

Worms and Worm Bins

Yelm Earthworms and Castings Farm

14741 Lawrence Lake Rd SE, Yelm

877-339-6767 (toll free) or

360-894-070

www.yelmworms.com

Worm bins, compost, worm castings,

Will ship via mail/UPS

Download more information on Natural Yard Care and soil building at www.kingcounty.gov/soils. Click on Documents.

Alternative Formats On Request

206-296-4466 • TTY Relay: 711

1-800-325-6165 ext. 6-4466

