

What Kind of Worm

There are two species of composting worms, also called red worms or red wigglers: *Eisenia fetida* and *Lumbricus rubellus*. Other garden worms won't thrive in a worm box.

It takes a handful or two of worms to get started in a small bin. 250 worms (¼ lb.) can compost roughly 1 lb. of food scraps per week.



Where to Find Worms

You can find red worms by asking on garden-themed social networks or purchasing them online. **There are also a few options for purchasing red worms in Whatcom County:**

Garden Spot Nursery
(360) 676-5480
900 Alabama St.
Bellingham, WA

Kurt Hawley
(360) 739-9676
Delivers

Robert & Debbie Smit
(360) 354-3583
9039 Guide Meridian
Lynden, WA

Wicked Worms
Leslie Cooke
(360) 739-2873
info@tru-line.net

Last updated 1/2018

For more information about worm and home composting, workshops, & waste reduction tips contact the WSU Master Composters/Recyclers:

Email: mcr.whatcom@wsu.edu

Call: (360) 778-5814

Visit: 1000 N. Forest St, Suite 201
Bellingham, WA 98225

Web: whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/compost.html



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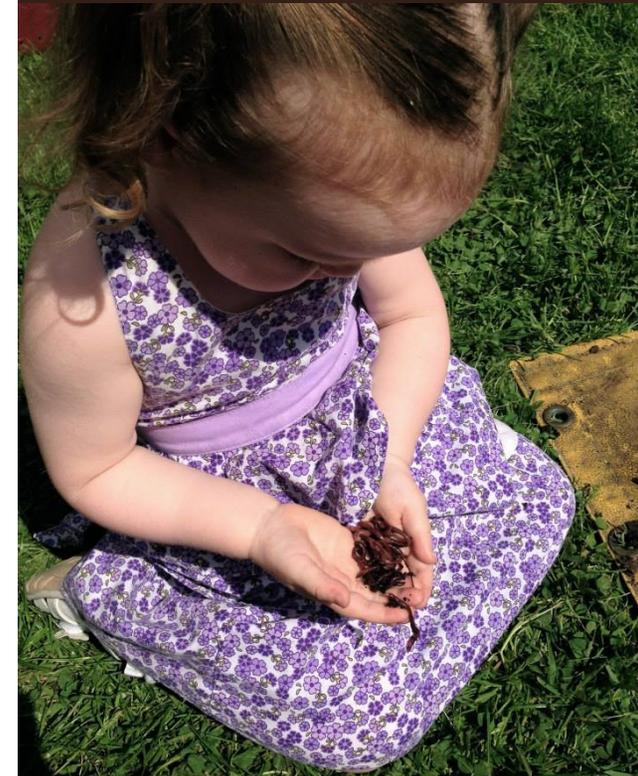


This information provided by Washington State University Extension and Whatcom County Extension's Master Composter Program. The Master Composter Program is funded in part by Whatcom County Solid Waste.

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Worm Composting Basics



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WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.

Worm composting, or vermiculture, is a process that uses worms to break down organic waste.

The Worm Bin

A salvaged wooden bin such as a repurposed cabinet is ideal, but you can use bins made of plastic, metal, or other materials. The worm bin should be between 12-24 inches deep and have a tight fitting lid. Plan to provide one square foot of surface area for each pound of food scraps added per week. Adequate surface area will keep your worm bin odor-free. For example:

Two lbs of food waste per week requires two ft² of surface area in the worm bin.

Metal and plastic bins must have holes drilled into the sides and top for aeration. Add drainage holes in the bottom if standing water develops. Solid wood bins are OK.

Temperature

Worms are most active when temperatures are between 55-77°F. Outdoor bins must be insulated in winter.

Bedding

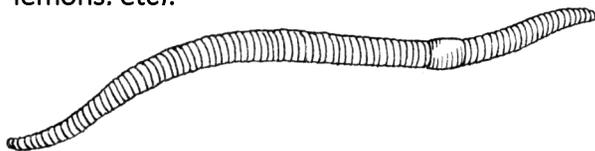
- Bedding provides a healthy habitat for the worms. It is also a food source and an odor barrier.
- Use shredded brown leaves, shredded newspaper and egg cartons, aged horse manure, coco coir, or a mix!
- Soak the bedding in water, then squeeze out excess moisture. Bedding should be

damp but not dripping. Too much moisture will drown your worms and smell.

- Add a handful of soil to provide grit for the worms.
- Place a damp sheet of cardboard or newspaper over the bedding to discourage fruit flies. Replenish bedding as it composts and disappears.

Feeding

Bury food scraps completely under the bedding in a different spot each time. Worms love non-acidic fruits and vegetables. Rinds, coffee grounds, tea bags, paper filters, and starchy foods are also all enjoyed by worms. Chopping up food scraps are easier for worms to eat than whole fruits and veggies. **NO meat, dairy, oils, pet wastes, or veggies with strong properties (spicy peppers, garlic and onions, lemons. etc).**



Harvesting

After three to six months, it's time to harvest the compost. There are many ways to harvest, here is one method:

Move composted bedding to one side of the bin, add fresh bedding to the other side, and bury food scraps on the fresh side. The worms will slowly migrate and you can begin using handfuls of the finished compost. Give the worms at least 3 weeks to fully migrate; plan accordingly.

Using finished compost

Finished compost can be mixed into potted plants, vegetable and flower beds, or any soils that need amendment. Worm compost is finer and is exceptional for seed starting mixes.

Troubleshooting

Too wet

- Add dry bedding
- Add aeration and/or drainage holes
- Reduce feeding

Too dry

- Add moist bedding and/or foods

Odor

- Make sure you haven't added too much food for your worms to eat
- Make sure food isn't concentrated in a dense, wet pile—mix in with bedding
- Reduce moisture

Fruit flies

- Bury food scraps below a thick layer of bedding
- Place a sheet of damp newspaper or cardboard over bedding
- Freeze fruit rinds before adding
- Tape fabric or mesh over drilled holes

Other insects

- Worm bins support many forms of life other than worms! Other organisms in the worm bin can be beneficial to the composting process. Little white worms are actually red wiggler hatchlings, another sign of success.

Worm migration

- Happy worms should remain in the bin! Check moisture and odor. Occasional escapees are normal.

It takes 3-6 months to create finished vermicompost.