

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.

Worm Bins 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

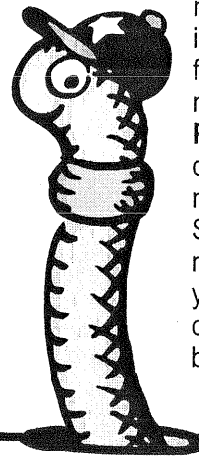
Red wiggler worms thrive on organic materials such as kitchen waste. Don't use earthworms or nightcrawlers as they live in soil and don't eat kitchen waste. A starter batch of a pound or two can come from a friend's worm bin, or see resources on this sheet. Worms like to stay between **59°-77° F**

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 & other information www.metrokc.gov/soils
- Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline 206-633-0224 info@lawnandgardenhotline.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

King County
Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division
206-296-4466
711 (TTY)

This list should not be construed as an endorsement.

North King County and Seattle	Products Available
Seattle Tilth Store , 206-633-0451 4649 Sunnyside Ave N, Seattle	Worms, books on composting, worm bin guides, and worm bins. Tuesday – Saturday, 10am - 4pm (hours vary seasonally). www.seattletilth.org
Sky Nursery , 206-546-4851 NE 185th St. & Aurora Ave N, Seattle	Worms, worm bins and accessories. Carries most composting items. www.skynursery.com
Stone Way Hardware , 206-545-6910 4318 Stone Way N, Seattle	Worms. Will ship via mail/UPS.
Yelm Earthworms and Castings Farm 14741 Lawrence Lake Rd SE, Yelm 877-339-6767 (Toll Free) or 360-894-0707	Worm bins, compost, worm castings, worms, organic fertilizer, soil amendments, potting soil, pest control products. Will ship via mail/UPS. Open Thursday – Saturday: 10am - 6pm www.yelmworms.com
Northeast and East King County	Products Available
Minter's Earlington Greenhouse , 425-255-7744 13043 Renton Ave S, Renton	Worms. www.mintersnursery.com
Molbak's Nursery , 425-483-5000 13625 NE 175th St., Woodinville	Orders worms for delivery to your home. Sells worm bins and worm bin accessories. www.molbaks.com
South King County	Products Available
Auburn Sports and Marine , 253-833-1440 810 Auburn Way N, Auburn	Occasionally stocks worms. Call first. http://auburnsportsmarineinc.com/sys-tmpl/door
Bainbridge Island	Products Available
Bainbridge Gardens , 206-842-5888 9415 Miller Road, Bainbridge Island	Worm bins. Doesn't stock worms but will help get them. www.bainbridgegardens.com
Internet and Catalog Sales	Products Available
Flowerfield Enterprise , 269-327-0108 10332 Shaver Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49024	Worms, worm bins and worm bin guides. www.wormwoman.com
Gardener's Supply Company , 888-833-1412 128 Intervale Road, Burlington, VT 05401	Worm eggs and worm bins. www.gardeners.com
Lake County Worm Farm , 800-399-9464 P.O. Box 1332, Kelseyville, CA 95451	Worms, castings, and worm bin guides. www.pacificsites.com/~wormfarm/
Gaiam, Inc. , 877-989-6321 360 Interlocken Blvd. Suite 300, Broomfield, CO 80021	Worms and worm bins. www.gaiam.com
Vermitechnology Unlimited, Inc. , 352-591-1111 P.O. Box 130, Orange Lake, FL 32681	Worms, worm bins and worm bin guides. www.vermitechnology.com

For printable documents and more information on Natural Yard Care and other topics,
please visit: www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/naturalyardcare/documents.asp

This material will be provided in alternate formats upon request.