

WORM COMPOSTING •Reduces waste disposal costs •Raises worms for fishing •Has no foul smell or pests •Provides a convenient method for converting kitchen vegetable wastes into rich organic fertilizer for house and garden plants.

A worm composting system can be easily started by following these five steps:

1. MAKE OR GET A WORM -BIN Wooden, plastic or metal boxes or tubes may be used. The container should be 8" -12" deep and of a size to accommodate the amount of garbage you produce. Approximately one square foot of surface area is needed for each pound of kitchen vegetable wastes per week. For example, a 1'X2'X3' box will serve a family of 4-6. Detailed Instructions for constructing your own bin are included.

2. ADD BEDDING Bedding holds moisture and provides a medium in which the worms can work and the garbage can be buried. It must be light and fluffy enough to allow air exchange. Worms actually consume bedding as well as the kitchen vegetable wastes. Bedding can be made of shredded newspaper, shredded corrugated cardboard, peat moss, or leaf mold. Bedding must be well soaked in water and wrung out before adding to the bin. You may add a handful of dirt every time the bedding is changed although it is not necessary.

3. ADD WORMS Red worms are the most satisfactory and efficient type of worm to use for composting. The worms need adequate temperature, moisture and ventilation. The optimum temperature is from 55-77 degrees. Remember that an active worm bin must be kept in a heated garage or basement during the winter to prevent freezing. The worm population increases (or decreases) according to how well they are feed. To determine the number of worms needed to populate a bin, figure one pound of worms for each pound of kitchen vegetable wastes produced per day. Worms process their own body weight of organic matter each day.

4. BURY GARBAGE Kitchen vegetable waste, which can be composted, includes vegetable and fruit scraps, eggshells, bread products, coffee grounds and tea leaves. Meat, bones, fats, and dairy products should not be composted. It may be helpful to keep a plastic container near the kitchen sink to collect scraps. Keeping it uncovered will prevent odor but may attract fruit flies. About twice a week, the contents may be buried in the worm bedding, rotating around the box utilizing a different area each time. Be sure to cover all the worm food with bedding. A sheet of black plastic should be laid over the surface to retain moisture.

5. HARVEST COMPOST While there are several methods of harvesting compost and adding new bedding, the most convenient is to move the compost to one side of the bin and add new bedding and garbage to the other. Replacing the plastic sheet on only the half of the bin containing the new bedding will allow the compost to dry out some. The worms will migrate to the fresh material and the compost may be removed and replaced with new bedding. This migration may take several weeks.

NOTE: Kitchen vegetable wastes compost well in a worm bin and yield valuable worm castings compost. When adding kitchen vegetable waste to your outdoor compost pile you can create odors and attract vermin and other unwanted visitors if the wastes are not buried in the middle of the compost bin. Be especially careful if you add kitchen vegetable waste to a compost bin. Burying kitchen waste in the ground causes similar problems.