

The **Worm Farm** is a user friendly way to recycle your kitchen waste. It is a robust, simple method that enables you to provide organic fertiliser for potted plants, vegetables and the garden generally.



Frequently Asked Questions



Where can I obtain compost worms from?

You can purchase your worms from Adobe Loos & Worms. We recommend that you purchase a minimum of 2000 compost worms.

How much will my worms eat?

This depends on how many worms you have. Worms can eat up to half their own body weight every day and can double their population every few months. If you start your Worm farm with 2000 mature worms (identify mature worms by a distinct ring shaped swelling around their body) they will consume up to 500 grams of scraps per day. After a few months you should have 4000 worms and you can feed them more. The baby worms, however, won't eat much and will take about 3 months to mature. As you become familiar with them you will learn their rate of food consumption.

How can I help the worms to eat more?

Worms will feed at a faster rate once they have adapted to any new food source. Worms will also eat more if kitchen scraps are mashed, blended or food processed. Controlling temperature to around 24 degrees C will improve the overall performance of your system. Worms will leave very acidic food such as onions and orange peels until after they have eaten their preferred foods. A handful of garden lime every few weeks will help to balance the effect of acidic foods. If you want worms for fishing, the regular addition of worm fattener (see recipe at end) will encourage stronger, fatter worms. Since they consume up to their own body weight each day, the fatter they are the more wastes they will eat.

What shouldn't I feed my worms?

Be careful what you feed your worms particularly if you are unaware of its source. Manures, for example, from horses, cattle or dogs often have Vermicides still active in it that were designed to kill parasitic worms in the animal. They can kill all your worms in one day. We recommend you allow the manures to age at least 30 days before you use them.

Can I feed my worms garden refuse?

Not usually. Your Worm Farm is designed to break down soft organic waste. Slow composting organic wastes such as garden refuse are best dealt with by conventional aerobic composting methods.

I've had my Worm Farm for nearly a month now, but the worms don't seem to be eating?

The worms may be eating your bedding material if you have used manure or compost in addition to any Peat Moss or CocoPeat. If that is the case, the worms will eat through this before eating any introduced food. If just the Peat Moss or CocoPeat was used, the worms should readily eat introduced food waste.

Should I add water to the Worm Farm?

Watering of the Worm Farm will enhance the production of liquid fertiliser. Food wastes are about 80% water which is released as the worms break them down. This will tend to stay in the bedding for a long time before eventually draining out. If you pour water over the scraps each week or two and then place the empty bucket under the Worm Farm, you will have a constant supply of liquid fertiliser.

Will I get too many worms?

No, you can never have too many worms. They self-regulate their population to the confines of available space and the amount of food you give them. Worm concentration should reach capacity 5,000 worms per square metre after 2 - 5 years.

Can I put compost worms in the garden?

Only if you have a thick surface layer of mulch in your garden. Compost worms require moist conditions all year round because they don't tunnel deep like pasture worms to find moisture. If you cannot provide this environment in your garden, don't introduce compost worms.

Why aren't the worms moving up from the lower levels into the new feed?

This situation could arise in two ways. First, you may be adding new food too soon before the worms can eat the previous food. This will result in a lot of uneaten food being distributed through the system and a general reluctance by the worms to migrate upwards whilst they can still access food lower in the system. Before adding new feed, stop feeding the worms for at least a week to ensure that all existing food in the lower level has been eaten.

What about severe temperatures?

Worms will tolerate a wide temperature range from about 10 degrees to 30 degrees C. If it gets much hotter than this, make sure the Worm Farm is in a shady cool position. If you live in an area that suffers from frosts, put your Worm Farm in the warmest possible position, an example being your laundry, garage or shed. If it is on a balcony or in the backyard, then cover the unit with a couple of old carpet underfelts or old blankets to keep some warmth in. Feed them a lot more food waste which will create some warmth as it decomposes.

It's raining and the worms seem to be gathering in one place. What do I do?

What you are noticing is the worms sensitivity to pressure changes in the weather. They will often go up high even before it rains. In nature, this takes them out of the soil to stop them flooding and drowning. Cover the Worm Farm to keep the rain out.

Are the little white worms in my Worm Farm baby earthworms?

No, baby earthworms are not white, but clear to opaque, before developing a reddish colour. They are just visible at this stage.

The 'white worm' is a type of worm called entrachyadids. They will not hurt compost worms but they do indicate acidic conditions, which can be overcome by the regular addition of a handful of lime. By placing a piece of moist bread in your Worm Farm, you can also lure the white worms to a small area for easy removal. It is important to note that many organisms that may appear in your Worm Farm (such as large populations of minute red mites, entrachyadids, and large soldier fly larvae) are beneficial to the break down of organic material, so there is no real need to remove them.

How do I keep ants out of my Worm Farm?

Ants will enter your Worm Farm if you have a lot of them in your backyard and particularly if you have let the bedding become too dry or acidic. Add water to raise the moisture level and add a liberal quantity of garden lime to where the ants are gathering. This should discourage them.

Will the Worm Farm attract flies?

Not normally. Sometimes the very small vinegar fly (often mistaken for the fruit fly) gets in, but these do no harm. However, very large numbers of the vinegar fly may indicate that you are feeding the Worm Farm too much and may be a prelude to problems such as offensive odours. To eradicate vinegar flies, slow your rate of feeding to what the worms will eat on a daily basis. Vinegar flies can be controlled with Pyrethrum Spray used every 2 days until there are no more flies.

What about maggots?

Should you experience any influx of maggots, it will most likely be the soldier fly or vinegar fly larvae. The soldier fly larvae grow up to an inch big starting out white but soon turning dark grey with distinct ribbing bands. Fishermen say they make great bait. The vinegar fly larvae are small, usually 1/4 inch or less. Boiling water may be used to control large clumps of maggots. The dead maggots will become worm food as will the small number of worms that may also be affected.

Will the Worm Farm smell?

The only smell associated with a well maintained Worm Farm is a pleasant rainforest odour. If your Worm Farm has an offensive smell, it is an indication that anaerobic bacteria have built up in the system in uneaten food wastes. Stop feeding the worms and stir the wastes in the top level lightly with a garden fork adding lime as well. This aerates the organic material and allows worms to move through it more easily. Repeat this aeration procedure regularly to prevent recurrence. Start feeding again when all smells are gone.

What about holidays?

Leaving an established Worm Farm for 3-4 weeks without constantly adding food is not a problem. Just feed the worms a good quantity of food waste before you leave. Make sure the Worm Farm is in a cool place under cover and well drained. Putting a soaked newspaper on top of your top layer will give added protection against their bedding drying out.

Worm Fattener Recipe

Chicken Layers Pellets - 50%

Wheat or Corn Flour - 10%

Powdered Whole Milk - 10%

Bran or Wheat Meal - 20%

Agricultural lime or dolomite - 10%

Mix the ingredients together and sprinkle lightly on the food wastes. That will last a couple of days. After several months you will have fat, tough worms in ready supply for fishing.

Worm Menu

As a guide, worms will eat anything that was once living.

This includes:

Left over vegetable scraps, fruit and vegetable peelings

Manures (well aged)

Tea leaves / bags and coffee grounds

Vacuum cleaner dust or hair clippings (also animal)

Torn up newspapers, egg and milk or pizza cartons (soaked first)

Crushed egg shells (these will help with the pH balance)

ADOBE LOOS & WORMS

02 6494 1051

0417 277 249

PO Box 751, BEGA NSW 2550

www.wormsloos.com.au

info@wormsloos.com.au