

SET UP your box bin

1



Select a shady place for your worm bin, indoors or out. Drill lots of holes in the bottom and **elevate the bin** on a couple of bricks so that there is always air underneath the bin and it drains freely. **Water daily.** The water that percolates through the bed – leachate – contains soluble nutrients and can be used to water plants.

2



Add 6 to 8 inches of moderately compressed bedding made from household cellulose such as paper pulp egg cartons or any kind of cardboard soaked and torn into small pieces. This creates a suitable habitat featuring multitudinous surfaces that retain moisture and numerous air pockets.

3



Add worms to the bin and include the partially-processed bedding they were packed in. This old bedding inoculates the bin with various fungi, bacteria, and invertebrates that work with the worms to break down decaying organic material. The worm bed is a decomposer *ecosystem*. Molds, mushrooms, and all kinds of little bugs are supposed to be there and will populate the bin over time, adding to its efficiency and stability.

4



Feed your worms. Feed old fruit, fruit rinds, skins, peels and cores; any veggies or vegetable trimmings, and grains such as rice, bread, cereal, and pasta. Place the food right on top of the bed. Avoid meat, dairy, and papaya seeds. Most find it convenient to save food scraps in the fridge and feed once a week. Stay ahead of their feeding rate. If you feed too much, you will smell a sour garbage smell. Stop and let them catch up. A healthy worm bin should have no odor.

5



Cover the food completely with a layer of fluffed-up shredded office paper or newspaper. This paper will also be consumed. When you feed next, you will lift the paper layer or push it aside to add more food. Then replace the disintegrating paper back on top and add new, fresh paper to cover. Top with a piece of burlap cut from a coffee bag or a 4-layer cover of medium shade-cloth. You can water right through the burlap or shade-cloth.

HARVEST your box bin

When the base bedding in your bin has been processed to vermicast, it's time to harvest. Depending on a number of factors, on average, bins are ready for harvest at six months, sometimes up to a year.

Stop feeding for a couple of weeks to allow the worms to finish any residual food. Continue to water lightly. Prepare a big batch of fresh worm bin bedding.

To start the harvest, cover a table with a plastic sheet. Upend your bin and dump out the contents. It will be a compressed lump. Get your hands in there and gently fluff up all the material. Don't worry about the wiggling worms - they will be OK. Divide the material and make several loose mounds. The worms will head to the bottom of the mounds to get away from the light.

1



Worms are *photophobic* - they don't like light. We use this knowledge to get them to go where we want them to go. This makes it easy to separate the worms from the vermicast.

2



Now start to pick away at the pile, removing the surface layer bit by bit. As the worms feel the light on their skin, they will head deeper into the pile until they form a ball at the bottom. Brush away the last cover of vermicast and scoop up your worm ball.

3



Fill your box with fresh worm bedding and re-bed your worms. Include any unprocessed material as inoculate.