

Set Up Your Can-O-Worms

Your Can-O-Worms consists of one collection tray, three identical working trays, one lid, five legs, one plastic spigot and nut, and a coir bedding block. Save the cardboard packaging to bed the worms.



1 Assemble collection tray

Snap in the legs and attach the plastic spigot to the base or collection tray. This tray serves to collect moisture that leaches through the bed or condenses inside the Can. Ventilation disks where the legs attach allow air to circulate beneath the bed.

Drain the collection tray frequently by turning the spigot counterclockwise. Do not allow liquid to build up. You may choose to leave the tap open and catch the drips in a jar or watering can. You'll want to water your plants with this nutrient-rich liquid called *leachate*.

2 Rehydrate coir block

Coir is shredded coconut husk, an excellent worm bedding that provides lots of tiny surfaces and air pockets. Place the coir brick, including paper packaging, in a bucket with 6-7 quarts of water. It will take a few minutes for the coir to rehydrate.

3 Prepare first working tray

Pick any of the three identical mesh-bottom working trays to serve as the **first working tray**. Use the cardboard "Welcome to Can-O-Worms" packaging disk to make a floor for the bedding of the first working tray. Squeeze excess water from the coir bedding and place it in the first working tray.

4 Separate worms from old bedding

Your worms came packed in bedding that is rich in microbial life and other decomposer organisms.

To separate the worms from this material, empty the container of worms and bedding on a plastic sheet and make a loose mound shape. The worms will dive down to get away from the light. Pick away at the mound, shaving off material from the surface until only a ball of worms remains.

5 Inoculate the coir bedding by thoroughly mixing in the old bedding material.

6 Add worms

Place your ball of worms on top of the prepared bed. They will disentangle themselves and quickly disappear below the surface.



*For best results, we strongly recommend that you start your Can-O-Worms with a **minimum of one pound** of worms, approximately 1,600 worms. If you start with less, it will take a very long time for your Can to reach capacity.*

7**Feed your worms**

Although they may take some time to settle in and may not eat for a few days, welcome your worms with some of their favorite grinds. Place a layer of food right on top of the bedding. Worms will eat all fruit (including citrus) rinds, skins, peels and cores, salad and vegetable trimmings raw or cooked; rice, bread, pasta, cereal, tea bags, coffee grounds and filters, egg shells and peanut shells. Do not feed meat or dairy products, and avoid fats, oils, and salty food. Do not feed papaya seeds.



Maintain approximately an inch of food in some stage of decay on top of the bed at all times. Don't let the worms eat everything up before adding more.

Worms will eat roughly their weight a day of food and paper waste. Start them off with more, and maintain a moderate surplus to stimulate reproduction. If you overwhelm the system with too much food, you will know because the bin will stink – a sour garbageman smell. If this happens, stop feeding, let the worms catch up, then slow down your feeding.

With observation and practice, you will soon determine the worms' feeding rate. Stay just ahead of them – feed to the brink of stink, but don't cross that line.

To speed up feeding rate, chop food waste into small pieces (or use a Cuisinart), and/or freeze it. The ice crystals will break the cell walls and make everything mushy. Be sure to thaw before feeding!

8**Cover with moist shredded paper**

Use shredded office paper, rip newspaper into one-inch strips, or tear up any kind of moistened cardboard to create a fluffy 2-to-4 inch blanket to cover the food. Moisten thoroughly until the bedding starts to drain excess water into the collection tray.



The layer of fluffy moist paper gives the worms cover and makes a suitable environment for the decomposer bacteria and other microorganisms.

Always bury food under a cellulose cover

Lift the cover aside to add more food, and ***add more paper often as it starts to disintegrate***. Use any kind of household cellulose material except glossy magazine paper. The cellulose bedding material absorbs moisture and gives structure to gooey decaying food. Cellulose adds bulk and maintains air pockets. The worms will consume it although it has little nutritional value – you will often see them crawling around this cool, airy paper cover.

**9****Cover with the lid**

Place the lid on the first working tray. The two other working trays can go into storage until they are needed.