

How to handle fresh VERMICAST

FAQ'S.... *My first worm bin harvest yielded a BIG pile of dark, rich, moist vermicast – now what? What about eggs and baby worms still in there – will they die if I use the vermicast? How do I store vermicast if I'm not going to use it right away? How come it doesn't look clean and crumbly like the castings I saw at the workshop?*

Save those babies! Season your cast.

You can safely use your vermicast in your garden straight out of the bin. However, here in Hawaii where every single little wormie is valuable, we like to “season” our cast for a month or so to allow any eggs to hatch and any baby worms missed in the harvesting process to get big enough to rescue. They will not survive in your garden.

Place your vermicast in a shallow plastic container and cover it with a lid with holes in it for ventilation, or simply cover it with a sheet of newspaper. **Vermicast is living material – do NOT place in a sealed container where oxygen will be depleted.** No need to water or feed – there is plenty of moisture and food to sustain baby worms.



Technically, this material is *vermicompost*, vermicast mixed with bits of decaying organic matter. Seasoning allows more breakdown of organic matter by the legions of decomposer organisms still in the cast.

After 3 or 4 weeks, dump out the seasoned cast and fluff it up. You are likely to find babies at the bottom where moisture is greatest. Remove and bed babies back in your worm bin. Your vermicast is ready to use.



You asked for it... *wood frame cast screener, new from Waikiki Worm Co! Fits right over a bucket for no-mess screening. \$40. Order via waikikiworm@hawaii.rr.com or 382-0432.*

OPTIONAL: drying, screening, and storing vermicast

The gorgeous, velvety vermicast you admired at a Worm Workshop or saw packaged at our booth at the Earth Day celebration has been processed a bit further. *It is not necessary to do this*, although it has some advantages if you are giving vermicast as a gift, storing it for any length of time, or using it in a commercial brewer to brew vermicast tea where bits of stuff can clog up the works. Or, you may prefer screened cast for purely aesthetic reasons!

Spread it out on a plastic sheet and let it dry somewhat, crumbling it with your fingers as it dries. **DO NOT** let it dry completely. It should have 10%-15% water content and feel cool and moist to the touch. When semi-dry, press it through a 1/8” hardware cloth to remove seeds, eggshells, and other odds and ends. This gives it a uniform texture.

Store vermicast in a container that will retain moisture but still allow airflow, such as a Ziplock bag with pinholes punched in it, or a plastic storage box with a few holes in the lid. Properly-stored vermicast has a two-year shelf life.