

# How to Set Up Your Worm Bin in Six Steps

1



Select a shady place for your worm bin, indoors or out. **Elevate the bin** on a couple of bricks so that it can drain freely. Use a tray, roasting pan, or kitty litter box to catch the leachate (moisture that leaches through the worm bed), or just hose the drippings directly into lawn or garden.

2



Add **3 to 4 inches of moderately compressed bedding** made from household cellulose such as shredded office paper, newspaper, or any kind of cardboard soaked and torn into small pieces. This creates a habitat for your worms that provides many surfaces and air pockets.

3



Your worms came packed in a quantity of nearly-processed bedding material. This old bedding contains billions of bacteria and other beneficial organisms that will help the worms break down waste. It is important to thoroughly mix this old bedding with the new bedding to inoculate the bin with these decomposer organisms. To **separate the worms** from this material, dump worms and bedding onto a plastic sheet and form a mound shape. Pick away at the mound, shaving layers off the sides and top, gradually making it smaller. The worms will dive away from the light and form a tight ball on the bottom. Brush away the remaining bits of old bedding and scoop up your worm ball.



**Mix all the old bedding with the new** and moisten generously so that water drains out the bottom. **Place the worm ball in the bed.** Do not pull the worms apart – they will unwind on their own and go down to make themselves at home.



4



5



**Feed your worms.** They will eat approximately their weight a day of fruit rinds, skins, peels and cores; any rotten vegetables or vegetable trimmings, and any grain products such as rice, bread, cereal, pasta, tortillas, and pizza crust. Place the food right on top of the bed. Do not feed them meat, dairy products, or papaya seeds.

You can feed daily, every few days, or even just once a week. Whatever routine you choose, stay just ahead of the worms' feeding rate and maintain some surplus to stimulate reproduction. *Do not overfeed.* If you feed too much, you will smell a sour garbage smell. If that happens, stop and let them catch up. A well-managed worm bin should have no odor whatsoever.

You can speed up the worms' feeding rate by chopping up and/or freezing the food (thaw first!).

6



**Cover the food completely with moist shredded paper.** Place 1 to 2 inches of shredded moist paper over the food. This serves three purposes: 1) gives the worms cover so they are comfortable coming up to feed, 2) creates a good microbial environment to help the bacteria, fungi and other organisms to do their job, and 3) keeps fruit flies out of your bin.

Always bury food under a paper layer, and **add fresh paper** as it starts to disintegrate.

Place the lid on top and your worm bin is up and running!