

USING A WORMERY

Worms turn raw fruit and vegetable waste into deluxe compost, so rich it is more of a fertiliser.

What worms need

- Warm conditions, between 10°C and 20°C. Site your wormery in a shady place in summer and protect from winter frosts.
 - A thick layer of damp newspaper insulates them from temperature swings.
 - A damp, but not soggy, environment. Prevent rain flooding the wormery.
- Worms need air, so make sure the bin isn't waterlogged. Worms can drown.

What worms eat

- Worms need a steady supply of raw fruit and vegetable waste, but not acidic orange, lemon or grapefruit skins or onion skins and leek leaves. They particularly like banana skins and melon rind.
- Worms feed on decomposing material, sucking tiny scraps from the soft edges of their food as it starts to rot. Cut up their food so there are more edges to soften. This lets the worms start eating sooner.
- Worms like newspaper and cardboard (the glue between the layers of cardboard is good protein for them). Add more as they eat it.
- Worms need eggshells for their digestion. Worms break up their food in their gizzard, like a hen, so require tiny bits of eggshell for grinding stones. The calcium stops their environment becoming too acidic.



Do not overfeed your worms. If the fruit and vegetable waste turns foul and mouldy, clear away the worst and compost it.

Cut down the quantity of food you give the worms but don't stop feeding altogether.

Only give worms what they can manage to eat, this may not be all your kitchen waste.

If you are going on holiday, give the worms some extra food and a lot of extra damp newspaper, they will be fine until you return.

Starting a Wormery

There are different types of wormery. Most have 3 trays or baskets that stack on top of each other with a solid sump at the bottom.

- The worms will need bedding. This is often supplied. You can use damp leafmould, 5cm deep, or some of a soaked coir brick.
- You will need approximately 1kg of worms, available from specialist suppliers. Don't dig up earth worms from the garden, they won't get the correct food in a wormery and may die.
- Put the worms on their bedding and scatter a thin layer of food on top. Place a thick layer of damp newspaper over the food and leave the worms to it.
- Feed them a small bucket of chopped up kitchen scraps each week. As the worm population grows, increase the quantity of food.

Make sure there's always a thick layer of damp paper to keep your wormery moist and cool. You'll need to add more paper as the worms consume it.

Managing the Wormery

When the first basket or tray is almost full, remove the paper, place a second basket on top, making sure the new basket comes in contact with the material in the lower one. Put food in the second basket and cover with damp paper.

Add a third basket when the second is full. The worms will leave the bottom basket, so take that away and use the wormcast in it.

There is usually a sump at the bottom to collect liquid, drain this off from time to time.

Dilute this 1 part liquid to 5 parts water and use as a feed for container grown plants, or pour it on a compost heap.

For more information on home composting or to contact us - www.askorganic.co.uk or 01450 860778

ASK Organic, in partnership with Scottish Borders Council, has a Home Composting Display within Woodside Plant Centre, by Ancrum, Jedburgh.



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