



## Keeping a worm farm

### Types of worms

Compost worms are different from garden earthworms: they are surface feeders not deep tunnelers. Some common varieties are Red Wigglers, Indian Blue and Tigers. Get your worm farm kit and compost worms at a nursery, hardware shop, or organic food market. Ask your council too: some sell discounted worm farms.

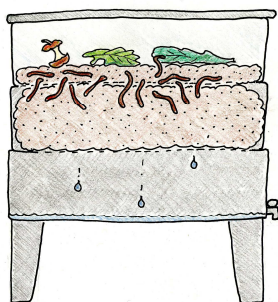
### Setting up

Worm farm kits come with three trays. The base one has a solid floor and a place for a tap. The other trays sit above and have holes in their floors to let worms move between trays and to allow drainage.

Choose a place that is cool and shaded: under a balcony or in a garden shed is good.

Assemble the kit by attaching the legs and tap to the bottom tray. Fit the 2nd tray, lay wet cardboard and newspaper in the bottom, and add a mixture of soaked coco-peat (it comes with the worm farm kit) and mature compost if you have any.

Now add your worms (usually between 500 and 1000 in a kit), cover with a damp hessian sack or more soaked newspaper, and put the lid on. Leave your worms to settle in for a week before giving them food.



### Feeding

Worms like fruit and vegetable peelings, juicer pulp, tea-bags, soaked cardboard and paper, vacuum dust, grass clippings and hair. Avoid bones, dairy, oily and fatty foods, and never give them citrus or onions. Only add as much food as the worms can eat - that's about 1 ice-cream bucketful a week at first. As they grow and multiply you can add up to 3 ice-cream bucketfuls each week.

When the 2nd tray is full of rich dark worm castings, place the 3rd tray on top, making sure the castings in the tray below touch the bottom of the new tray so the worms can move up into the new one. When the worms have settled into the new tray you can remove the lower one, pick out any worms left in it, and use the castings.

### Problem solving

If your worm farm becomes smelly you are probably overfeeding your worms. Cut down on the food and sprinkle dolomite or rock dusts over the materials in the top tray.

If ants become a problem, stand the feet of the worm farm in cups of water.

Prevent rats and cockroaches by keeping the lid on securely.

### Using the worm juice and castings

Worm castings are like a slow release fertilizer. You can mix them with compost or add water to them to make a slurry, then spread it over the soil in the garden.

Worm juice is like a liquid fertilizer and acts quickly to benefit plants. Dilute it to the colour of weak tea and water around the base of your vegetables and ornamental plants.