



## Making a free-range worm farm for a garden bed

You will need: a piece of ground for a little garden bed, a metre-long piece of 225mm stormwater pipe or a couple of old 20-litre plastic drums, a power saw or hacksaw, a drill, a 25 to 50mm hole saw, a spade, a large plant saucer to fit the end of the pipe, some organic mulch and 2000 compost worms (Red Manure worms or Tiger worms).

- 1 Find a spot quite near the kitchen door with some soil and enough space for a garden bed, say 1.5m square at least.
- 2 Lay out a garden bed with edging and a deep hole in the middle for the worm tube to go into. Keep some of the soil.
- 3 Take your piece of stormwater pipe, or cut the bottoms out of two plastic drums and glue them together.
- 4 Drill a lot of large holes (about the size of a 50c piece) all around one end of the pipe, covering the bottom 40cm.
- 5 Bury the holey end of the pipe in the hole in the middle of your garden bed, so the holes are below ground level.
- 6 Half-fill the inside of the bottom of the pipe with soil. Leave room for kitchen scraps to fill it up level with the outside soil.
- 7 Get your mulch and your worms ready. Water the whole area well, and then scatter your worms around outside the tube.
- 8 Quickly mulch all around the tube, covering the worms up.
- 9 Now pour a bucketful of kitchen scraps into the worm tube. Add a layer of mulch on top to keep the scraps moist.
- 10 Cover the open end of the worm tube with the big saucer and fill the saucer with water to act as a bird bath. Birds will help your garden by eating up pests.
- 11 Mulch all over the rest of your little garden bed, and plant into it whatever will do well in the position you've chosen.
- 12 Keep adding food scraps to the worm tube to keep your worms well fed. Add enough water to keep the tube moist (not wet). The worms will breed up to the right number for the area. They will aerate your soil, eat up all your food scraps and turn them into the best fertiliser and plant food you can get. Worm castings have great water-holding properties too.



*Just sink the holey lower end of tube in the earth. Worms will go in & out of the holes.*

### Worm farms provide you with many benefits:

Your soil is aerated and fertilised by the worms adding their castings to it and enriching it.

Your plants will be stronger and more resistant to disease as the richer environment strengthens them.

No waste: keep your scraps and make richer soil out of them. (No need to have a smelly dustbin.)

Easy livestock to care for: feed extra, including soaked newspaper, if you're going on holiday.

The worms provide food for your quails and hens.

### What to feed your compost worms

Worms will eat anything that once lived. They are not too keen on lots of acidic stuff though, as it burns their skin.

They like alkalinity, so add a sprinkling of lime to their scraps. Tomatoes and citrus are not their favourite thing, but they can manage if they don't get too much at once.

They'll eat up all the bits that would otherwise go smelly in the dustbin, like  
~ vegetable peelings  
~ leftover pizza  
~ rotten veg and fruit  
~ old flower heads

and as well  
~ vacuum cleaner dust  
~ old cotton rags  
~ hair off your brush  
and lots of other stuff.

You may decide against feeding them meat and fat as these can bring blowflies.

### What you can plant in the garden bed

There will be good levels of nitrogen in the bed, so if the sunlight is right you can plant annual herbs like parsley, coriander, dill and basil. Also salad greens like leaf lettuce, rocket, endive, and Chinese vegetables.