



The Blue Worm
Bin Presents



15 Tips to Worm Composting Success



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If you're new to worm composting or even a veteran there are probably things you can do better. If you've relied on YouTube or many blogs out there you've very likely gotten some questionable information. Here I will list 15 things, perhaps you only need to change one or 2 perhaps several.

1. keep moisture like a wrung out sponge. A hard squeeze should only yield a few drops of water. Control excess moisture by adding dry organic materials with wet.



2. To increase your worm composting ability you need more worms. Split your bins frequently to maximize reproduction. Overcrowding reduces worm reproduction.
3. Your worm bin is a mini ecosystem, don't panic or feel the need to eradicate every bug that isn't a worm. You'll rarely run across an insect that is more harm than an annoyance. Most will remain in the worm bin where there's food. Springtails, pot worms, mites, pillbugs, and soldier fly larvae actually speed up the decomposition process. Indoors, fruit flies and fungus gnats are likely to be the ones that annoy you. None of these will harm your worms.



4. Learn to feed "just enough" overfeeding can cause issues for worms. Frequently these problems are referred to as protein poisoning or acidic bin. In fact worm mortalities from over feeding are usually due to volatilization of ammonia. Ammonia is toxic to worms and over feeding can easily result in ammonia being created as nitrogen within the food is released. Under feeding limits the casting production. To find a balanced amount to feed start with an amount of about 1 cup (250ml) for each 1 pound (450 grams) of worms you have or estimate you have. If this is too little it will be gone in under 3 days, if it's too much there will still be a fair amount left after 5 days. Ideally you want to feed between every 3 & 5 days.



5. Allow for adequate airflow- worms do best and create the best compost with plenty of air. You'll have fewer escapes and a lot less wall climbing if you completely remove lids from tote type systems. Drilled holes are seldom enough air to keep worms happy and the condensation that will accumulate on bin walls encourages climbing to find more air. Instead cover bins with fly or mosquito netting. It'll allow plenty of air, prevent condensation and hold fungus gnats and fruit flies inside. You can lift a corner of the screen and stick a vacuum cleaner hose in and suck up adult gnats or flies before fully removing the screen.
6. Use more carbon rich material. Most worm farmers use too little carbon material when composting with worms. Materials like coir, peat, cardboard, paper etc provide some safe havens for worms to retreat to if the food begins to ferment or release ammonia. Higher carbon also provides better food value for fungi (important to plant growth). A vermicompost with a bit more carbon is easier to sift, less wet and generally more appealing to look at.

7. Leave the worms alone: There's a strong tendency, especially when we first start vermicomposting to flip the bedding and check on the worms far too frequently. Some research suggests that every time we flip the bedding and disturb our worms that breeding can be interrupted for 48 hours. I'm honestly not sure I believe that but there does seem to be a slow down. Flipping or fluffing the bedding can bury food and create hot spots as it begins to compost. Buried food can also cause ammonia released during composting to be trapped in the bedding and cause poisoning of the worms. One exception is large outdoor beds or windrows, flipping these can help to allow oxygen in and ammonia and other toxins to off gas.
8. Don't worry about PH so much- additions of eggshells, powdered oyster shells or garden lime (not hydrated or slaked lime) will not allow the bin to become acidic enough to ever harm your worms. The only times I've ever legitimately seen alkaline vermicompost was when someone added ashes or the wrong type of lime. If you choose to monitor PH, skip the meters and get a soil test kit with the litmus paper strips and follow the directions carefully. Meters are notorious for being inaccurate even some that are quite expensive.
9. Forget about collecting "tea" from the bottom of your worm bin- some commercially available bins have a spigot on a bottom catch tray, allegedly to catch "tea" or "wee" or "pee." Worms have no urinary system, so they don't pee or wee and this isn't tea it's called leachate. If you collect and use it, it can provide benefit or it can cause plant death it's inconsistent in composition. Better to keep moisture levels appropriate and use finished compost to make extracts or aerated teas.



10. If you're new to vermicomposting, start small. Worm farming is easy at a home/hobby scale. At a large commercial scale it is HARD WORK. Best to make sure you really have a passion for it before trying to jump into a large business.

11. There's no need to grind, blend or otherwise make food mushy for worms. Time is a non renewable resource, don't waste it trying to make a fancy worm food. Grinding reduces volume and causes a rapid release of moisture. It can make your bin too wet and can result in overfeeding because it LOOKS like less food. If you're feeding your own food waste just give it an extra chop or 2 with the knife while preparing a meal. It really doesn't result in faster casting production and is more hassle than it's worth.
12. Feed stuff from outside. The power of vermicompost lies largely in the microbiology within. What better way to introduce healthy soil microbes than to use food or bedding that's been in contact with the soil? This also brings in some of the shredders and compost helpers we want. It can bring in fungus gnats too so be prepared for the little flying annoyances. Use screens and vacuum techniques or use predatory nematodes.
13. When you are trying a new food or bedding, try it in a small container with only a few worms. This way you'll know for yourself if it is ok to use and you'll only risk a small number of worms.
14. Try to avoid purchasing a lot of equipment or tools. Buy what you really need, but a part of the composting philosophy is to reduce waste. Buying fancy gadgets you don't really need for worm composting goes against that philosophy.



15. If you're going to sell worms or castings above all else BE HONEST. This industry has been plagued with scams and dishonesty. Please let's work to clean up our own reputation.



Conclusion

Worm farming should be fun and easy, many times it's tempting to overcomplicate the process. Sometimes it's easy to cut a few corners. Sticking with the tips above will allow you to successfully produce worm castings to use in your garden or potted plants. If you are looking to network with serious worm farmers and people who've made a successful business of worm farming you should consider joining the [Worm Farming Alliance](#)

