



MAKE A WORM FARM

Vermiculture, as worm farming is known, is a great way to make rich compost. It uses recycled kitchen scraps and newspapers for food and bedding for your worms.

Containers

You can make an indoor or outdoor worm farm. Many garden centres have ready-made worm farms that you can purchase; however, it is simple to make your own from household objects. Whether you are making an indoors or outdoors farm the principle is the same. First you need a container to hold the worms and their bedding. Plastic or polyurethane works well, just make sure that it is at least 60cm in length to give your worms some room. Remember to place it in a cool, shaded area as worms are sensitive to direct sunlight.

Ingredients for a successful farm

First make a couple of small holes in the bottom of your container. This will allow excess water to drain out (so your worms won't drown!). Always place your worm farm over a tray to catch the fantastic liquid fertiliser that the worms make as it drains out. You can dilute the with water and spray it over your garden later. Next place in some bedding for the worms at the bottom of the container. Newspaper works well for this; moisten the paper but don't have it dripping wet. Then add some

soil and fill to about three quarters of the way up your container. Now you are ready to add the worms! You need to purchase special worms called Tiger worms for this job, which will process the food scraps much faster than regular garden Earth worms. Contact your local garden centre to purchase these.

Kai time

Once all the bedding and worms are in place you can start feeding the worms kitchen scraps. Fruit and vegetable scraps are the best. Avoid adding meat scraps as these are too fatty for worms. You can add a small amount of coffee grounds if you like but too many can make the soil too acidic. Egg shells (from cooked eggs) are great for worms and reduce the acidity in the soil. You can put in some manure as well but check with the supplier first as horse and cow manure may contain traces of worming medication that can kill your worms! Check the worms regularly to see if the amount of food is correct. If there is too much food the worms will not be able to eat it and that is when the worm farm may start to smell. Your worm farm will not have an offensive smell if the worms are receiving an amount of food that they can process easily.

Emptying the worm farm

Once every 3 months you need to empty the worm farm to make use of the compost created. You can do this by emptying the entire farm and carefully picking out the worms. You then need to set up the container again and replace the worms back into the farm. Alternatively you can start to feed the worms on one side only and once most of the worms have moved over to this side, remove the compost from the other side and then refill with new bedding. You can make worm farms using several containers stacked vertically or horizontally, as the initial container becomes composted, start another one and place the food there. They need to connect to each other so the worms can move from one container to another. The worms will move to the new container leaving the first one empty so you can remove the compost.

For further reading visit:

Christchurch City Council
<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/waste/composting/MakeYourOwnWormFarm.pdf>
or <http://www.wormsrus.co.nz/>