

Keeping Your Worms Happy



- Worms like to live in a warm, dark place—70-degree temperature is ideal. If it's too cold or hot for you, it's too cold or hot for them!
- Worms need moisture in their environment. Their bedding should be slightly moist but not drippy; like a wrung-out sponge. Check the bedding moisture when you add food. If the bedding feels too dry, you can mist it with a spray bottle.
- Every couple of weeks, feel the bedding at the bottom of the box. You may need to pour extra water into the box to add moisture to the bedding in the bottom. Make sure there is a basin under the box to catch the excess water!
- Worms need air—they breathe through their skin! Avoid putting heavy material directly on top of the worms.
- Feed worms no more than three days' worth of food. Very small pieces are best when they are young since they have small mouths. Bury the food in the bedding to keep odors down.
- Bedding should be shredded and kept loose for air circulation. Shredded paper (not glossy and not too much colored paper) is an ideal bedding. Shred office paper, newspaper, and/or light brown bags and mist with water to prepare the bedding. The food you add to the box to feed the worms will add moisture to the bedding as well. As long as you are adding food to the box, keep adding bedding so that the box is full. Just like us, the worms need space, and the bedding allows them to move around.



Best Foods for Your Worms

- Leafy Greens—lettuce, kale, chard, spinach
- Melons, squash, pumpkin, cucumbers
- Broccoli & cauliflower
- Apples, bananas, berries
- Pasta (no sauce), rice, bread, cornmeal
- Coffee grounds, used tea bags and leaves
- Egg shells & avocado skins - worms love to lay their eggs in these protected areas!
- Shredded cardboard
- Shredded paper—no colored ink please
- When adding denser veggies like carrots or potatoes, the worms would appreciate it if you cut them into small pieces, but you don't have to. Whole fruit and veggies will take longer to break down. Carrot tops and potato peelings are the perfect size!
- You can add onion & garlic skins in small quantities



Foods to Avoid

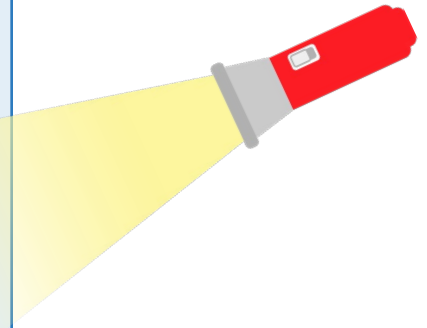
- Citrus
- Meats
- Fats or grease
- Spicy foods
- Onions
- Dairy
- Sugar
- Anything with preservatives



How to Harvest Worm Castings

When your worm box is about $\frac{2}{3}$ filled with moist, dark, rich, earthy soil, you will want to begin harvesting the castings. The redworms' waste is toxic to them, so they will need to be separated from their castings and supplied with fresh bedding in their box. Here are some ideas for separating the worms from their castings:

- Because worms are sensitive to light, you can shine a light on the pile of castings and bedding, and the worms will burrow to the bottom of the pile. Keep scooping and scraping away the castings until you are left with mostly worms at the bottom. (You can never separate the worms completely from all the castings and bedding. It's okay to put a small amount of castings back in the box with the worms and fresh bedding.)
- Be sure to keep the worms moist when they are out of the box. They can dry up quickly when touched by human hands and left out of the box for an extended time.



Signs to Watch

- There should not be any smell! Bad odors indicate you are feeding the worms more than they can eat and the food is going bad. If this happens, take out uneaten food and add shredded paper.
- Helpful online site: tumbleweed.com.au/pages/worm-farming-faqs
- We purchase worms and worm blankets from unclejimswormfarm.com
The blanket helps to keep worms warm during cold weekends in the school.

