

Worm Farms

City of Nedlands Waste Services

One of the major components in domestic rubbish going to landfill, is organic materials like kitchen scraps, vegetable peelings, lawn clippings, garden refuse and dog waste. Yet this organic material can be developed into a useful commodity, a superb garden fertiliser.

The castings produced by the worm farm enriches the soil and can reduce water use, effectively saving money. The amount of material sent to landfill is also reduced.

What do worms actually do?

Worms turn food scraps into compost very easily – they eat the food, digest it and produce castings – it's as simple as that. The castings have a similar texture to soil and do not smell.

A worm farm is on display at Council Administration.

What is worm farming?

Worm farming (or vermiculture) is a form of composting that relies on compost worms to digest food scraps and produce worm castings (droppings). Worm castings are odourless, nutrient rich compost for gardens. Worm farming is the quickest method of composting, takes up little space and is very easy.

Worm farming is usually done in specially made worm farm containers; these worm farms are designed to make feeding worms and collecting their castings easy. Most are also designed not to attract pests.

What can I do with the castings?

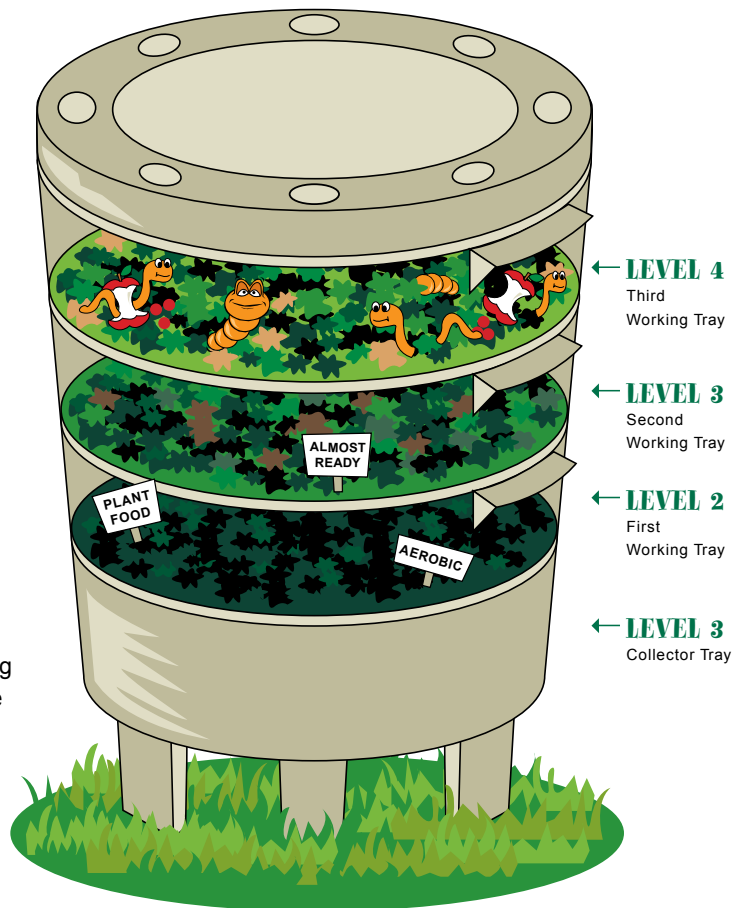
The castings contain nutrients to help the plants grow. Nutrients are easier for plants to use when in castings form than they are in artificial fertilisers.

Castings should not be exposed to UV or allowed to dry as this kills the beneficial microbes.

Worm castings can be used in a variety of ways around your garden:

- Fertiliser – dig in or mulch over a layer of worm castings around your plants and water in well.
- New garden beds – dig castings into the soil before planting new plants.

As the nutrients in castings are not too strong, they are suitable for fertilising native plants.



What can you feed worms?

You CAN feed worms:

- ✓ Fruit and vegetable scraps
- ✓ Saw dust (unchemically treated)
- ✓ Shredded moist newspaper
- ✓ Coffee grounds and tea leaves/bags
- ✓ Crushed egg shells
- ✓ Vacuum cleaner dust
- ✓ Hair clippings

As a general rule, DO NOT feed them:

- ✗ Meat and dairy products
- ✗ Onions
- ✗ Citrus (oranges and lemons)

For more information, contact
The Worm Shed on 9571 8003

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The Worm Shed's Top tips for worm farmers

Keeping cool

In the hot summer months, you will need to take extra care with your worms.

Make sure your worm farm is in complete shade.

On really hot days, remove the lid so hot air can escape.

Place a frozen bottle of water in the farm. Crack the lid a little and, as the ice melts, your worms will keep cool.



Going away

If you are going away, you can give your worms some extra food

before you leave. Place some shredded paper and/or compost,

sheep poo or horse poo in the worm farm. Make sure it is moist first, and do not give them excess food scraps. This will only cause a rotten, stinking mess.

It is a good idea if you can get someone to water them while you are away.

Alternatively, you can tip a bag of sheep or horse poo in a moist or reticulated part of your garden, remove your worms from their home and place them where the manure is.

When you get back from holidays, tip a fresh/new bag of horse or sheep poo in the same spot and within a few days, the worms will collect in the new food - you can then collect them and return them to their home.



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Composting

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How to compost correctly

Compost enriches soil and reduces waste to landfill. Below is a guide to what you can and cannot compost.

YES



Green material

- Thin layers of grass/lawn clippings
- Green leaves
- Horse, cow, sheep and poultry Manures
- Kitchen wastes (mixed with drier materials)
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Tea bags and coffee grounds
- Egg shells
- Bread
- Hair

Brown material

- Old garden plants
- Moistened hay/straw
- Paper and cardboard
- Thin layers of leaves and bark
- Vacuum cleaner waste



NO

- Fatty food wastes
- Meat scraps
- Milk products
- Weeds that have gone to seed
- Diseased plants
- Human wastes
- Glossy magazines
- Bones
- Pernicious weeds
- Pet wastes
- Chemically-treated wood
- Oil



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STEPS TO MAKING COMPOST

1. Choose a sunny site that is close to the kitchen.
2. Break up the soil around the area where you want to place the bin, and bury the bottom edge 3-5 centimetres underground.
3. The first layer should comprise leaves, twigs and other dry compostible materials, such as shredded paper or cardboard. This provides aeration. Moisten this well.
4. Add a layer of green material, such as kitchen scraps, green leaves, grass clippings or spent cut flowers.
5. Follow with a brown layer – which includes dry leaves, straw, or shredded newspaper. Brown materials should always be moistened after they are added.
6. Continue alternating green and brown layers until the bin is almost full, then cover with a 5 cm layer of garden soil or finished compost. This is important as it contains many beneficial microorganisms that help to speed up the composting process.
7. Turn the compost every two weeks if possible. This can be done by using a hanging basket hook, which is plunged into the compost and pulled out. It is not essential, but will speed up the process as it increases the amount of oxygen available in the system.
8. The compost will be ready after 2-3 months or so. (Faster in summer, longer in winter). The compost is ready when it smells earthy, has a crumbly texture and there are no readily identifiable food products. Some materials that are not as readily compostible (such as straw, twigs, eggshells or corncobs) may be visible. These can either be placed aside for the next batch of compost, or allowed to break down fully in the garden.
9. Repeat, and enjoy the benefits of compost, while knowing you are helping reduce the amount of green waste going to landfill.

HINTS AND TIPS

- ✿ Small items will decompose faster. If possible, chop materials into pieces as small as possible. This will help to speed up the process.
- ✿ If the compost appears wet and smells of ammonia, more dry brown material such as straw, leaves or newspaper should be added. This will help absorb moisture and restore the carbon to nitrogen ratio.
- ✿ Compost should be about as wet as a wrung out sponge. To test, pick up a handful and squeeze firmly. Water should appear at the surface, but not form large drips.
- ✿ If the compost is taking a long time to break down, you may need to add a source of nitrogen. This can be in the form of animal manures (such as chicken or horse), or commercial products such as blood and bone.
- ✿ Some people prefer to have two bins in use. As soon as the first bin is full, leave it to mature, meanwhile start the process again in the other bin.
- ✿ Pet and human wastes should not be composted as they may contain harmful bacteria or parasites.



To find out more, visit
nedlands.wa.gov.au

