

Worm farming cheat sheet

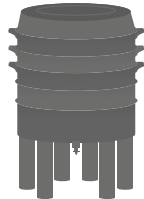
Worms will eat most of your kitchen waste and turn it into a high quality fertiliser (called worm castings). The great thing about worm farms is that they can be indoors or outdoors, and are perfect for small spaces. This cheat sheet will help you successfully set up a worm farm and allow it to thrive!

There are many types of worm farm, from DIY degassed fridges and polystyrene boxes, to commercially available bucket and multitray systems. Whilst the aesthetics, price points and hands on approach varies with each, the principles below are the same for all systems.

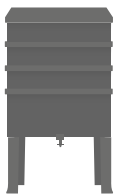
Types of worm farm



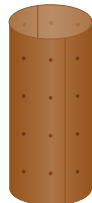
Hungry bin



Round tower



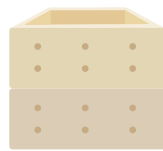
Square tower



Tube with holes



Polystyrene box



Wooden version

Step 1: Position your worm farm

Climate is the most important consideration when positioning your worm farm. Composting worms are surface feeders, preferring temperatures of 12° to 24° Celsius (55° to 75° Fahrenheit). They can die if temperatures drop below 5° Celsius or rise above 30° Celsius (44° and 85° Fahrenheit).

In cold climates a worm farm needs a warm spot, and may need to be placed indoors during the winter months. In hot countries, a shady spot is required in summer. If your worm farm is portable it may be possible to move as the seasons change, but when positioning a fixed worm farm, take into account all the seasons.

Also consider placing your worm farm in a practical position close to your kitchen door or along an easily accessible route with adequate lighting if outside. A worm farm in an inconvenient location will rarely get used.

Worm farms do not smell, so keeping one indoors is a popular option.

Step 2: Set up your worm farm

In addition to the worm farm (the structure that the worms will live in), you will need:

– **Bedding material for your worms.**

Shredded paper, cardboard or, newspaper is a great option, soaked in water. Coco coir can be used too.

A few handfuls will be enough.

– **Composting worms** (*Eisenia fetida*, *Eisenia Andrei* or *Lumbricus rubellus*).

A fully functional worm farm needs around 1000 worms (about 1 cup), but worms breed quickly so you can start with less. It will take around 3 months to build numbers as eggs are laid, hatch and the worms mature.

– **A cover.** Even though worm farms have lids, it is recommended to place an old towel, sack, cloth or piece of cardboard on top of the worms and castings to reduce moisture loss and also light – worms do not like light.

– **Drainage container.** All worm farms have a tap or well that allows liquid to drain out of the worm farm. The liquid is aerobic and is great for the garden, but can turn anaerobic quickly. Keeping the tap open and allowing the liquid to free-drain reduces this problem, and ensures the liquid doesn't build up and drown the worms.

Worms will eat anything that was once alive, so a worm farm that is made of wood, bedding and any natural fabric covers will eventually be eaten, and will need replacing over time.

Step 3: Vermicomposting Your Food Scraps

Worms eat their body weight in food per day, so 1 cup of worms will process 1 cup of food scraps per day. More food than worms will mean a stinky worm farm. If you produce a lot of food scraps, you will need more worms! When adding food to the worm farm, try to bury it amongst the existing castings or bedding, and cover to reduce flies or other unwanted pests. Burying and covering food also reduces any smell.

Anything that can go in a compost bin can go in a worm farm.

Troubleshooting: Common Worm Farming Problems

Here's a quick summary of common worm farming problems and how to deal with them:

Too dry (looks dry, is dry to touch, ants are in the worm farm): add moisture.

Too wet (contents are sodden): add dry shredded paper.

Flies: ensure food scraps are buried, cover surface of worm castings with an old towel or hessian sack to stop flies laying eggs. Reduce the amount of food being added.

Smelly: Ensure food scraps are buried, add extra shredded paper and reduce the amount of food being added.

Worms are escaping: check moisture levels, add fresh bedding (shredded paper), ensure there is not too much food. If it is a hot day add ice blocks to the worm farm or soak with cool water. A wet towel on the outside of the worm farm can reduce the internal temperature.