

How to Feed my Compost Worms



Correct feeding is one of the key elements to ensure your compost worms are producing consistent, high quality castings to use on your garden. Feeding your worms the right food, in the right amount, at the right time, will help ensure they stay happy, healthy and productive.

What can I feed my compost worms?

Worms can eat food waste, paper, textiles and green organic waste. While worms eat a wide variety of foods, it is important to keep in mind that worms do not have teeth so can only process softened products.

Worms can eat some foods straight away, particularly coffee grounds, tea bags, banana and banana peel and cold manures like goat and rabbit manure. Pre-composting food waste helps start the breakdown of worm feed and creates a better environment for the worms. If you can't compost food scraps first, just feed the worms smaller amounts.

There are two types of foods that worms can eat: high nitrogen and high carbon foods. Worm food should contain a mix of both foods to encourage a high volume of good microbes to develop in the worm castings. The table on the next page lists some of each kind of food.

We also recommend feeding grit to your worms. This might be crushed limestone or eggshell. As worms don't have teeth, they need a diet that includes some grit to help them digest their food. These substances can also help neutralise acid in the worm food.

It is also important to keep the worm farm moist, but not soaking wet to provide a good habitat for the worms.

What shouldn't I feed them?

The reality is worms can eat just about everything – in moderation. However, the items listed in the red column overleaf are not ideal worm food and are best avoided for easiest worm care. Dairy and meat tend to attract flies and vermin. Tomatoes, onions and chilli are very high in acid. Pawpaw and pineapples contain enzymes which could risk worm health.

If you have a very large worm farm, it would be possible to feed these items in very small amounts.

How Much?

It's important to strike the right balance with how much you feed your worms, both for worm health and for your own enjoyment of gardening. Feed your worms about a handful in a corner of your worm farm every 2-3 days. It is best to cover the food lightly with bedding to keep the flies away.

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Types of Worm Foods

High carbon foods Feed lots to your compost worms	High nitrogen foods Feed in moderation	Do not feed to your worms Put these in your bokashi bin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “browns” – straw, dry leaves, sawdust, wood chips, bark, small twigs well broken up. • Dry or pre-composted grass clippings and seed-free weeds. • Shredded paper. • Torn cardboard. Worms are known to breed in the corrugations, so don't peel back the layers. • Moist newspaper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household scraps. • Animal manure. • Compost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy products (e.g., cheese, milk, yoghurt, cream) • Meat products (e.g., leftover steak, bones, sausages) • Citrus and pineapples • Paw paw • Onion and Garlic • Tomatoes • Chilli • Bread, rice & pasta • Vinegar and dressing • Oil and grease.

When?

Worms don't need to be fed every day. It is often better to feed them enough for a few days, and let them digest that food before giving more. The simplest way to check if it's feeding time is to check whether the food from last time is composted. If it's mostly gone, it's time to start feeding in a new location.

Where?

We recommend feeding in a different corner or side of the worm farm each time. This way, you will ensure the worms work through the whole worm farm, ensuring a nice, even layer of castings. Feed only the top tray to ensure the worms stay at that level, so they are easy to check on and harvest when necessary. When a lower tray is full, place the food directly on the next tray and move the blanket on top of the new tray.

Further Advice

The Australian Worm Firm has joined up with other local worm farmers to create private Facebook advice groups for each state. In these groups you can post photos of your worm farm and ask for tips and advice from our friendly worm farming community. The groups are as follows:

Worm Farming Advice South Australia
Worm Farming Advice Northern Territory
Worm Farming Advice Victoria
Worm Farming Advice Tasmania

Please join the local advice group for your state and ask any questions you want.

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Worm Farming Advice Queensland
Worm Farming Advice New South Wales + ACT

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