



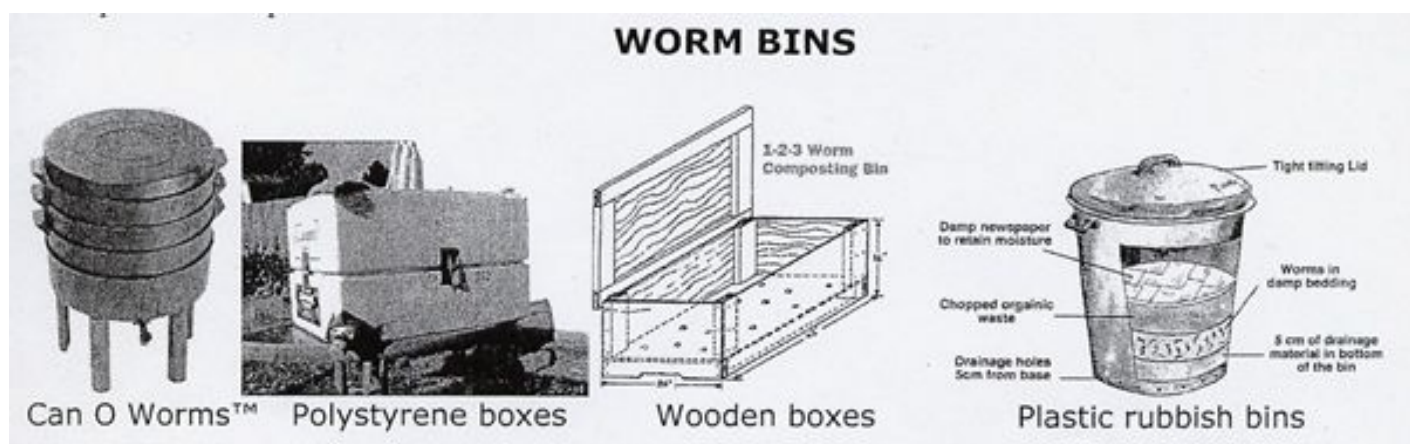
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Riverton Organic Growers Fact Sheet | www.sces.org.nz

WORM FARMING

It's fun, easy and a great way to keep your household scraps out of the landfill and turn them into rich soil.

A worm farm can be made from any type of container as long as it is large enough to hold enough worms to take care of your organic household waste. One kilo of worms will get through approx 500gms per day. Containers could include stackable boxes, plastic rubbish bins, premade systems like the 'Can o' Worms' or an old bathtub. They need to be able to drain, as liquid will build up.

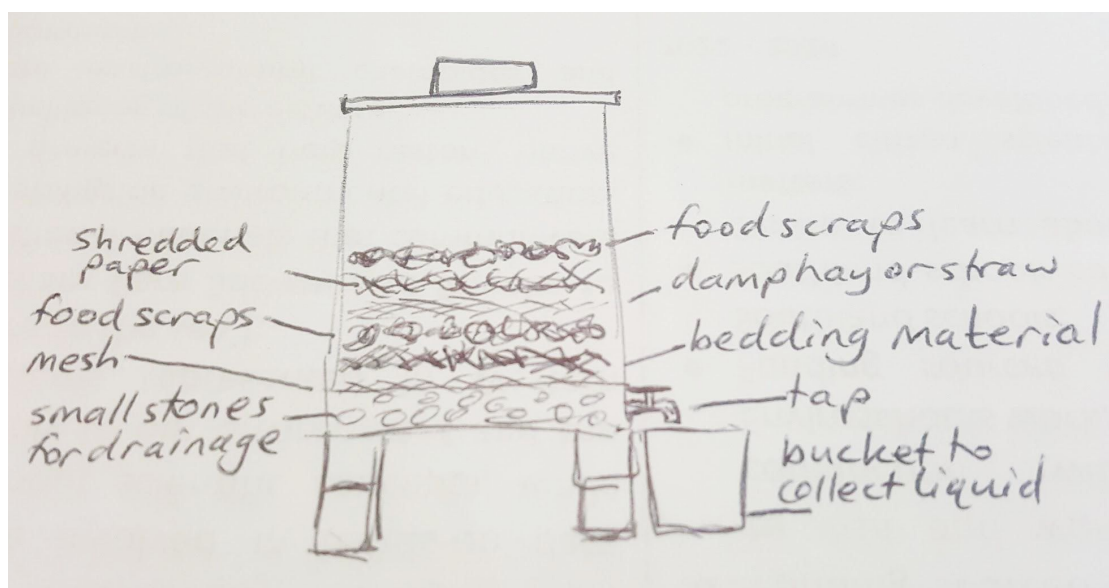


DRAINAGE

Put a layer of small rocks in the bottom of the container and then a layer of weed matting on top. This will let the liquid drain out to be collected - this is a very nutrient-rich liquid fertiliser when diluted to the colour of weak tea. If your drainage isn't good, the worms will drown and the worm farm will stink!

THE BEDDING

Next you will need to provide some bedding for the worms to live in. A layer of damp compost, straw or scrunched up newspaper will be to the worms liking. Rotted manure also works well (make sure it is not fresh as it will get too hot for them).



WORM FARMS

THE WORMS

Tiger or Red worms are the type you will need for composting your food waste. You can get them from someone else who has a worm farm or buy them from some garden centres or Environment Centres (or just look online for a local supplier). You will need around 500g or an ice cream container full to get started. Place the worms on top of the bedding and leave for a week before you start to feed them. This lets them settle into their new home.

FEEDING TIME

Feed the worms in a different spot each week. After about six weeks you should be able to revisit the first place, as it should be finished by then - if not, feed a little less until the numbers of worms build up more. Good worm foods include:

Fruit and vege scraps
Crushed egg shells

Dead or dying plant material
Animal manure (but not from cats or dogs)

Coffee grounds
Shredded Newspaper

A sprinkling of lime each month will provide the worms with calcium and grit to help them digest food (they have no teeth!).

A COVER

Worms like it to be dark and moist so keep your worm farm covered with a layer of wet newspaper or cardboard, a piece of plastic or old carpet or underfelt. You will also need a lid to keep out vermin and stop too much rain going in. Put your worm farm where it will get shade in summer but some sun in winter: worms can die if it is too hot, and will slow down when it is cold.

HARVESTING VERMICAST

Feed only in one part of the worm farm and after a couple of weeks the worms will have moved to where the food is, leaving the other end ready to take out and begin spreading around the garden. Another approach is to spread a tarpaulin on a flat surface: tip the worms and vermicast on the top then start to gently scrape off the vermicast - the worms will go down to the bottom of the pile to get away from the light. When you only have worms left put them back in the worm farm and start again!

TO USE VERMICAST

Vermicast may be applied as a liquid fertilizer by mixing with water to a weak tea colour. Plants absorb this liquid rapidly. You can also spread a handful around each plant in your garden. Vermicast is excellent when added to a homemade potting mix - you can use one part vermicast, one part bark fines and one part compost (plus a few handfuls of sand for drainage). Vermicast contains excellent nutrients in very plant-available forms.

NOTE

You may find small white worms, slaters, beetles and fruit flies in your worm farm - do not be alarmed, they are all helping the worms to turn your food scraps into soil - as long as the conditions are right, your worms will be hard at work turning waste into wonderful!

