

Composting using a worm bin is a great way to recycle food wastes like coffee grounds, tea bags, vegetable peels, fruit rinds and grains. By letting worms eat your food wastes, you'll end up with one of the best soil amendments available – worm castings.

## Composting using a worm bin

There are several low-cost worm bins you can use to compost your food wastes. A worm bin can be made out of a dark-colored plastic bin or wooden box. Or, test your carpentry skills and build your own bin using the plans in this brochure.

If you use a recycled bin or box, make sure it didn't previously contain toxic materials. Also, remember that any worm bin must have drainage holes in the bottom. If you're using a plastic bin, drill air holes in the lid.

### Keeping your worms happy

#### DO FEED THEM

**Vegetable scraps**

**Fruit rinds and peels**

**Coffee grounds and filters**

**Tea grounds and bags**

**Breads and other grains**

#### DO NOT FEED THEM

Meat or fish

Dairy products (cheese, etc.)

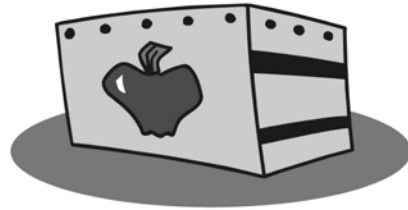
Butter or cooking oils

Oily foods

Pet wastes

### Where to find worms?

A starter batch of red worms can be dug out of a friend's worm bin or from a manure or compost pile. You can also purchase red worms by contacting the WSU/Whatcom County Extension Master Recyclers/Composters program at (360) 676-6736 or (360) 398-1310, ext. 56736.



## Getting your worm bin going

The first thing you need to do after setting up your worm bin is to fill it with shredded and moistened newspaper, cardboard, peat moss or brown leaves. Then scatter your worms on top and cover them with some of the "bedding."

As you generate food wastes, bury them in the bedding and let the worms go to work. Before you know it, they will have turned it all into high-quality compost, suitable for use on houseplants, seedlings or garden beds.

Every six months or so compost should be moved to one side of the bin and new bedding added to the empty half. At this point, bury food wastes in the new bedding only. Within a couple months, most of the worms will have migrated over to the new bedding. The finished compost can then be harvested. New bedding can be added to the empty half and the whole process started all over again!

For more information on worm composting, see Mary Appelhof's book, **Worms Eat My Garbage** (available at most libraries or your local bookstore).

For more information about composting in Whatcom County, contact any of the following organizations:



**WSU Whatcom County Extension  
Master Recyclers/Composters Program**

(360) 676-6736

[whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost](http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost)

e-mail: [whatcom.compost@wsu.edu](mailto:whatcom.compost@wsu.edu)

**Whatcom County Recycling Hotline**

(360) 676-5723



**Whatcom County  
Public Works**

(360) 676-7695

[www.whatcomcounty.us/publicworks/solidwaste](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/publicworks/solidwaste)



## BUILDING & USING A WORM COMPOST BIN

**Build Your Own Worm  
Bin**

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**Choose From Two  
Different Styles**

...

**Using Your Worm Bin**



**Whatcom County  
Public Works  
Solid Waste Division**

## Building a Worm Composting Bin

This worm composting bin can be built for about \$25 using new wood and hardware.

### Features

- Tight-fitting lid keeps moisture in and pests out.
- Single unit – no parts to misplace

### Materials List

- 1 – 4' x 8' sheet 1/2" plywood
- 1 – 12' utility-grade 2x4
- 1 – 16' utility-grade 2x4
- 2 lbs. 6d galvanized nails
- 1/2 lb. 16d galvanized nails
- 2 – 3" door hinges with screws
- Wood Glue
- Optional: Clear polyurethane, varnish or paint

### Tool List

- Tape Measure
- Saw Horses
- Long Straight Edge or Chalk Snap Line
- Skill Saw or Rip Hand Saw
- Hammer
- Screwdriver
- Drill with 1/2" bit
- Safety Gear (gloves, safety glasses, hearing protection)

## Directions for building your worm composting bin

### Construction Details

Measure and cut the plywood. (see FIG. A).

#### To make the base:

Cut the 12' 2x4 into five pieces:

- 2 pieces, each 39" long
- 2 pieces, each 23" long
- 1 piece 20" long

Nail the 2x4's together on edge at each joint with two 16d nails (see FIG. B). Then nail the plywood base piece (23" x 42") onto the 2x4 frame using 6d nails. Notches for handholds can be cut in the end base boards (see FIG. C).

#### Building the bin sides:

Cut four pieces from the 16' 2x4, each one foot long.

This will leave a 12' piece which will be used to build the lid. Place one piece under each end of each side panel so that each 2x4 is flush with the top and side edges of the plywood. Nail the boards in place. Nail the side pieces onto the base frame. Nail the ends onto the base and sides.

#### Completing the bin:

To reinforce the box, nail at least every 3" wherever plywood and 2x4's meet. Drill 12 - 1/2" holes through the bottom of the box for drainage.

#### To build the lid:

Cut four pieces from the remaining 12' 2x4:

- 2 pieces, each 45" long
- 2 pieces, each 20" long

Lay these pieces in a rectangle with the short pieces inside as indicated (see FIG. D). The plywood top should be inset from the edges of the 2x4's by 1-1/2" all the way around (see FIG. E). Nail the plywood onto the 2x4's securely. Place the hinges on the back side of the box at both ends on the 2x4's, and on the under side of the 2x4 lid frame so that the lid will stand upright when opened.

**Your worm bin is now ready for composting! To further protect it, you may coat the outside with varnish, clear polyurethane, or paint.**

