

## **Composting Frequently Asked Questions and Answers?**

If you're just starting out composting your kitchen and household waste these tips are for you.

### **Which wormery should I buy?**



Whichever design suits you best, all of our designs are proven and reliable composters but the tray system designs, like [Can-O-Worms](#) , [Worm Hotel](#) and [Worm Factory](#) units will give you maximum performance and be the easiest to use. [Can-O-Worms](#) is our best seller and most people find that it can compost the kitchen waste of, say, up to five people. [Worm Hotel](#) works on the same principle as does [WormFactory](#) but is perhaps more suited for the smaller household. If in doubt give us a ring on 0845 602 3630 and we will happily go through the model comparisons with you.

### **What sort of worms are composters?**

There are many different types of creatures with the name worm, such as glowworms and mealworms, but all the useful composting and garden worms are earthworms. There are more than 2000 species of earthworms worldwide but, thankfully, you don't need them all!

At 'The Bin Company' we find the best [worms for composting waste](#) are 'dendras' *Dendrobaena veneta* and 'reds' *Eisenia andrei*. These species are sometimes called tiger worms, brandlings or surface litter worms. The same composting worm species, reds and dendras, are equally at home composting both kitchen waste and garden waste. The other earthworm species which you may be familiar with is the common garden worm *Lumbricus terrestris*, commonly known as the 'lob' worm.

### **Can I collect the worms from my garden for a wormery?**

The most commonly found worm in the garden is the lob worm. Lobs are deep burrowers and will not survive in a wormery. A few red worms can usually be found in a well established garden compost heap and could be added to your wormery, but why not leave them to help in the compost heap? The natural habitat for dendras is in the leafy waste of the forest floor so they are less likely to be found in a normal garden.

Remember, to worm compost effectively you need lots of worms, approximately 1kg per cubic metre, so if you do decide to collect your own, you'll need plenty of time and plenty of patience to say the least.

### **Do I have to keep buying worms?**

No, worms are prolific breeders and will expand their numbers to suit the conditions they find. In the absence of predators worms can live for up to 15 years and can breed every couple of weeks!

### **So, will I get too many worms?**

No. Unlike humans, a colony of worms automatically regulates its numbers to suit the available resources.

### **Why compost my kitchen waste separately from my garden waste?**

Kitchen waste can, of course, be composted on your conventional garden compost heap. But gardeners usually situate their compost heap right at the bottom of the garden; and who can be bothered to navigate through the shrubbery in their slippers to throw on a teabag and a few eggshells? A neat, self-contained wormery right by the back door saves a whole lot of effort. Not only is it more convenient but you can add all sorts of waste that you might otherwise throw in the dustbin, things such as cooked vegetable leftovers, dog hair, apple peel, cardboard etc are all great waste for a wormery. You might think it doesn't matter but the average household produces 200 kilos of compostable kitchen waste every year and that's potentially a lot of compost!

### **What kitchen waste won't compost?**

Obviously, worms cannot eat glass, metal or plastics: these will remain untouched in the wormbin. You should also avoid too many acidic foods like citrus fruits or large quantities of onions and garlic.

### **How much waste will a kit compost?**

Worms eat around half their own body weight in waste a day, so it entirely depends on how many worms you have in your wormery. The more worms you have the faster the composting. We recommend that you start with at least 500g of worms. Initially waste should be added in small quantities, but you will soon get a feel for how much your

worms are able to eat. Eventually, the worms will regulate their numbers to suit the amount of waste you feed them. An efficiently run kit could contain 3-4kg of worms, which will produce several trays of compost a year, plus a continuous supply of liquid feed.

### **Where should I keep my wormery?**

Put the bin in a place that's convenient to you, most of our customers like to keep theirs as close to the kitchen door as possible. Outside is probably most suitable as the air flow is better than inside; in a shed or garage is fine. Worm activity is sensitive to temperature as they slow down when it's very cold. It is also best to keep the kit shaded from the hottest mid-summer sun.

### **What can go wrong with a kit?**

Follow the instructions that come with the kit and you should not have problems. Remembering to add a handful of LimeMix every couple of weeks and ensuring you add plenty of dry fibre (cardboard etc.) are a couple of things which people sometimes forget and can cause the kit to get a little wet or acidic.

### **How do I harvest the casts?**

Worms like to work in the fresh waste near the surface so, when you want to harvest a batch of compost from a bin such as [WasteJuggler](#), you first skim off the top 20cm or so (this contains the worms) and save it to restart your next batch. You can then remove the rest of the compost from the bag underneath.

[Can-O-Worms](#), [Worm Hotel](#) and [Worm Factory](#) are easier still. When the bottom tray is full of casts, you simply remove it from the stack, collect the casts, and return your now empty tray back to the top[ of the stack as a new top level. Simple. Don't worry if you haven't fully understood, it really is easy when you have the worms and the instructions in front of you!

### **Why do wormeries have a tap?**

Worms breathe through a layer of moisture on their skin and therefore the contents of the wormery should be kept moist (not wet) at all times. The sump is there to collect any excess liquid. As it passes through the bin this liquid becomes charged with nutrients and therefore makes an excellent plant feed. The tap is there to help you collect it. Dilute with 10 parts water and use it to feed your plants for free!

### **Will I need to replace bits of the kit?**

The [LimeMix](#) will last about 18 months and your worms will always welcome a little [WormTreat](#) (use it to get an under-performing wormery back to full efficiency). Also,

you may wish to replace the [Moisture Mat](#) from time to time. Your worms however are self-perpetuating.

### **Why doesn't 'The Bin Company' supply a smaller wormery?**

Worms need a reasonable surface area in which to work effectively. If you try and compost in a miniature bin, with a few dozen worms, nothing much will happen. Even if yours is a one-person household your worms will breed to match the level of waste you produce and you will produce compost, just in smaller quantities.

### **What happens when I go on holiday?**

You have a great time, see new places, meet interesting people, catch a cold at the airport... Seriously though, you needn't worry about your wormery. Make sure it's working well before you go, then forget about it 'till you return home, the worms will be fine for up to a month.

### **My old wormery doesn't work well, what can I do?**

If you have suffered problems with poor performance from another brand of wormery in the past you need our [DIY Rescue Kit](#). Rescue Kit contains the 'insides' of our proven WasteJuggler design, all ready for you to fit into your existing wormery bin. Easy to fit and easy to use, Rescue Kit makes your existing bin as productive and reliable as a WasteJuggler!

### **Can I build my own wormery?**

Lots of people do. Arm yourself with Mary Applehof's book [Worms Eat My Garbage](#), the bible for all worm composting enthusiasts, this along with a DIY Rescue Kit will be all you need. You'll find all those hard-to-find, special items you need to complete your own custom wormery right here at the The Bin Company, or give us a call on 0845 602 3630 to talk through your plans.

If you are building a large composter you will probably want to start off with one or two kilos of worms (depending on the size of composter); some bedding material (to give your worms the best start); and a large bag of lime mix.

**Good Luck!**