

## **Keeping Composting Worms for Vermicompost to make Compost Tea**

**If you wish to keep composting worms for a supply of vermicompost, it is quite simple. I use red wigglers but there are other varieties. You can keep them in bins, or other specialized containers now on the market or in a pile of material.**

**If you wish to start a small bin, say 18 inches high X 15 inches wide X 24 inches long, begin with about 2 pounds of worms (2000 worms). Just get a plastic storage bin and poke some holes in the bottom and bottom corners for air/drainage, line the bottom with a piece of landscape cloth, put in some moist bedding/food (paper strips, wood shavings, peat moss, horse poo {they love horse poo}, brown leaves, used coffee grounds, banana peels, kitchen scraps, etc. (No Citrus, no meat). Place your worms into about 2 to 3 inches of the bedding/food and cover them over with another 1 inch layer of moist bedding. Keep moist! Put holes in the lid for air and put it on. When you see that they are eating their way through this, place in another layer on and on until the bin is full. Look at the material to be sure it is a rich dark color. If not leave the worms in to finish the job. You may stir it up once in a while to aerate. If you see little springtails and mites in the bin, this is a good sign because they work in harmony with the worms. It should take about 2 to 4 months for the bin to fill. Then you trap the worms out by using one of those mesh trays for carrying transplant pots filled with their favorite food. I use wet peat mixed with coffee grounds/banana peels. Place it on top covered with wet newspaper (you probably can't get the lid on at this stage) The worms enter through the holes. It usually takes 3 to 5 days and you snatch the trap off and put them in a new bin or aside while you empty and start over. There will be stragglers to grab and eggs that are smooth yellow/brown grape seed sized that you can choose to pick out or not. Each egg/capsule contains up to 3 worms or more. If conditions are good your worms have multiplied enough to split into two bins. And on it goes.**

**If you wish to use the pile method; We live in a cold winter area so we put our worm pile in a barn with a concrete floor (gravel & lime actually). The barn is 16 X 24 feet and we fill it up in early summer 4 feet deep with horse and or cow poop mixed with wood shavings and or peat and bits of straw/hay/leaves/paper/whatever. We wet it down put our worms (2000 pounds?) in and cover it over with wet cardboard and keep it moist. We have a few lights in the barn which keep the worms from traveling. They don't like light. Around April/May we trap the worms (see previous method) and harvest our beautiful vermicompost packed with beneficial microbes. If we make CT with it we spread out the used compost in our gardens and the eggs hatch out so we fill our soil with worms. They say that red wigglers don't stay in soil but that has not been our experience. They eat up the dead organic matter and produce castings right there in the garden. You can even spread out wood shavings or paper for them to eat.**