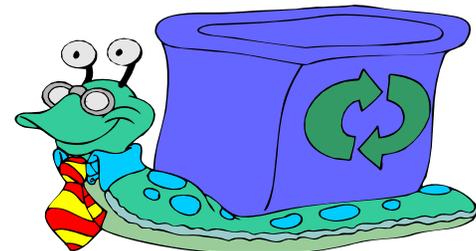


Vermicomposting



Lumbricus rubellus
(common redworm)

Cultivating worms to eat our food and paper waste and produce the best fertilizer known to man



Vermicomposting

- Worm composting is neat, easy, and odorless
 - you are managing hardy worms instead of bacteria
 - no turning required
 - no proper mixture of materials required
 - no chopping
- A great way to turn hard to dispose food wastes and office paper into fertilizer
- Can be done indoors, on the patio, or in any moderate temperature place

Vermicomposting

- And...
the finished product, worm castings, is a nitrogen rich fertilizer which can be used on potted plants both indoors and outdoors
- Reduces or eliminates the need for purchased fertilizer
- Is of great interest to children and adults alike - those slimy creatures become pets.

Any size bin can work

- A rule of thumb is two square feet of surface area per person or one square foot per pound of waste per week.
- Worms will reproduce to fill the box but will not overpopulate
 - hermaphrodites (both male and female organs)
 - reproduce at two months of age
- Should start with a pound of worms which must either be purchased or donated by a friend



Selecting a bin

For sale from Santa Clara County



Buy or build
your own



Don't use chemically
treated woods or
highly aromatic woods

<http://www.wormdigest.org/wormbins.html>

A Home Made Worm Bin from an Old Recycling Bin



Old fence wood



Many 1/4" drain and air holes



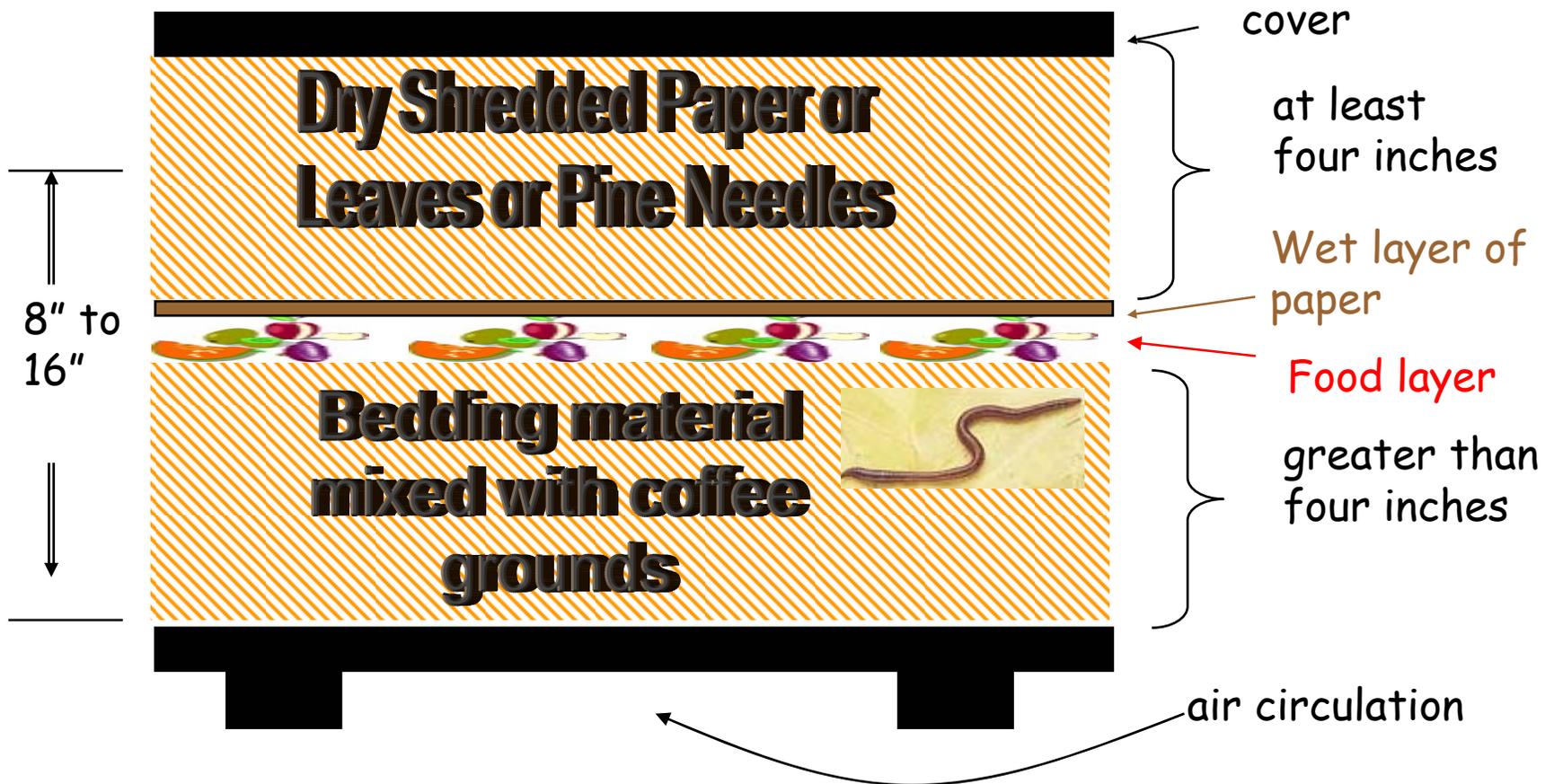
Old 2x4 from anything

Inside a Worm Box



Organization of the bin

The bedding material should be damp but not so wet one can squeeze water from it

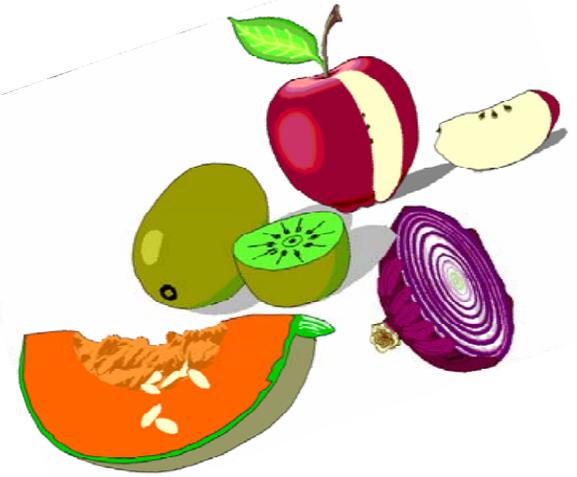


Bedding material

- Shredded office and junk mail paper
 - can dry easier than news print
- Shredded boxes and newsprint
 - These are valuable recyleables so maybe the worms shouldn't get them
 - avoid glossy print
- Dried partially decomposed leaves
- No soil - these worms are litter dwellers



Worm Food



- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Pasta, cooked beans
- Coffee grounds complete with filters
- Tea leaves, bags
- Egg shells
- Paper towels, napkins
- Banana peels and egg cartons

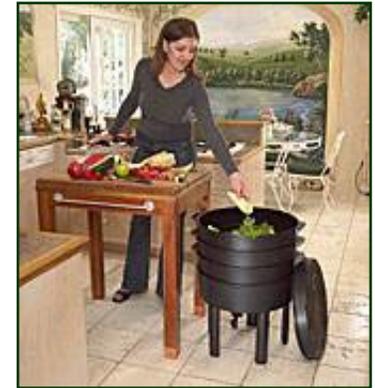
What to avoid

- No animal products - meats, bones
- No dairy products - cheese
- Be careful with breads (because of molds)
- No seeds (because they won't break down)
- Yard clippings
- No pet wastes
- No oils or plastics
- No soil



Locating the bin

- Ideal temperature is between 55°F and 77°F
- Plenty of air circulation
- In the shade during summer especially if a plastic bin is being used
- Good locations include under a shade tree, patio, garage, or laundry room (commercial bin only)
- One speaker at our class keeps one in her living room



Source of Worms

The Worm Dude

www.thewormdude.com

(408) 227-5267

Sonoma Worm Farm

1-800-447-6996

www.sonomavalleyworms.com

Common Ground

650-493-6072

www.commongroundinpaloalto.org

State of California information resources at:

www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/worms



Harvesting Castings

- Castings are toxic to worms and should be harvested when most of the bedding materials have become dark castings
- There are many ways to harvest
 - vertical harvest -take lower layers
 - horizontal harvest - move finished materials to one side and feed on other side
 - dump and sort - spread out and pick out worms
 - variants of above
- Keep the worms - use the castings

Using Worm Compost

- Slow Release Nitrogen Rich Fertilizer
 - I use it instead of fish emulsion on bedding plants in my greenhouse
 - Spread around potted plants
 - Spread around vegetables or flowering plants in the garden
 - Can be sifted onto lawns
 - Incorporate into soil around shrubs and trees
- Can be incorporated into a planting mix
- Preferred compost for compost tea brewing applications