

APPLICATION OF WORM CASTINGS

Earthworm castings are even richer in nutrients than compost, so they must be used more sparingly. Castings are rich in bacteria, calcium, iron, magnesium, sulphur and 60 other trace minerals. N-P-K is about 1-1-1 according to one source.

Lawn

Apply castings once per year at 20 lbs. per 1000 square feet.

Annuals and Perennials

Put a small handful of castings into each hole as you plant. Four times a year, apply castings at a rate of 10 lbs. / 1000 square feet -- OR -- once per year at 20 lbs. per 1000 square feet.

When preparing beds, mix 6 inches of compost into the soil, then mix in castings at the rate of 20 pounds per 1000 square feet.

Garden

When germinating seed, place in bottom part of soil. At transplanting time, put a small handful of castings into each hole as you plant. This is also true for bulbs, vegetables, herbs.

Potted Plants

Mix a small amount of earthworm castings into your potting soil. Remember that castings are very potent, so don't overdo it. No more than one-fifth of the ingredients should be castings.

Contact the WSU Master Recycler Composter office to learn more about the program and dates for upcoming training.

Compost Tea

Put compost in a burlap bag and set in water. Agitate every once in a while. In a few hours to a few days (depending on amount of castings and water) you will have worm tea. You can make worm tea in containers from the size of a watering can to the size of a garbage can, or larger. For use, the tea should be a light amber color. If it is darker than that, simply dilute with water. Pour a pint of the worm tea around shrubs, water your lawn with it, soak seeds in it before planting.

The castings used to make the tea is still potent. Use it as you would use fresh castings.

Sources for red wiggler worms

- WormPolice@aol.com
(360) 273-9303
Rochester, WA
- Yelm Worm Farm
mail@yelmworms.com
1-877-339-6767

WSU MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTERS OF LEWIS COUNTY

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How to make a simple worm bin



1. Select a sturdy container, 10 gallons or more with lid. Shown here is an 18 gallon plastic tub.



2. Drill 4 to 6 1/2-inch holes close together on one end of the bin for easy drainage. Drill several more holes around the edge of the bin just under the lid or in the recessed areas of the handles for air circulation



3. Add at least one three-pound coffee can full of shredded newspaper to the bin, then spray with water until barely damp (should be the consistency of a wrung-out sponge).



5. Add a little water and mix well until it is all evenly moistened, but not wet. Mix materials thoroughly.



4. Add two coffee cans full of worm bedding mix consisting of shredded newspaper, coffee or tea grounds, crushed egg shells, dried leaves or a small amount of dried grass, aged manure or aged sawdust from softwoods (no cedar or treated wood) lightly dampened.



6. Add worms and gently spread them around. Cover worms with several layers of shredded, damp newspaper. Feed worms vegetable and fruit scraps and peelings, coffee grounds with filter, tea bags, crushed egg shells, etc. See worm menu for full list.



7. Prop the worm bin up on concrete blocks or some other structure and slightly tilt it toward the drain holes. Place a bucket under the drain holes to catch the "worm tea." Cover the box with the lid.

Harvesting the Worm Castings

There are several methods of harvesting compost or worms. The most convenient is to move the castings to one side of the box and add new bedding (dampened) and food waste to the other. Feed only on the new side. Covering only the new side of the bedding will encourage worms to travel to the darker side to feed. After 2 to 3 weeks, most of the worms should have migrated to the new side and you can harvest the castings. Add fresh bedding to the vacant side and begin feeding again in the alternate pattern. Another option is to push the castings and food to one side. Place a small mesh bag such as laundry bag or onion or potato bag in one end of the bin. Add some new, moistened bedding and begin putting food into mesh bag. After several weeks most of the worms will have migrated to the new food source in the mesh bag. Carefully lift the mesh bag out, remove the castings, then replace the worms and food into the empty bin.



WHAT IS A MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER?
A 'Master Recycler Composter' is a recycling enthusiast of any age, who has been formally trained by the Washington State University Extension. A Master Recycler Composter provides information on local recycling options, composting, vermiculture, water quality, hazardous waste disposal, and safe alternatives for household and gardening needs.