



BESPOKE HAND BUILT
WORMERIES

It's a Win Win!

Generate your own nutrient rich organic matter to enhance all plant growth. Help the environment by not sending your food scraps to landfill.

www.thewormman.co.uk

CONTENTS

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03 – 05

Introduction

06

How does it work?

07

Looking after your worms

08–11

How to use worm castings

12–15

Facts & Tips

16

Get in touch



Introduction



The 'Worm Man's' wormeries are a great addition to your household for many reasons:

By having one you will be helping the environment by recycling your food waste instead of sending it to landfill. Food that ends up in a landfill site rots and releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. If we stopped throwing our food waste away it would save the equivalent of at least 36 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

By having a wormery you will create your own nutrient rich worm castings that can be used for compost or a liquid fertiliser. There is no better natural product for your plants and garden

If you treat yourself to one of the 'Worm Man's' unique designed wormeries he will build it to a bespoke size to fit your garden.

All wormeries can come complete with a starter pack of worms and bedding .



1

If you look after your worms they will look after you in return and provide you beautiful nutrient rich worm castings.



2

Each of the 3 stage shelf system has a mesh base allowing the worms to travel up through the wormery in search of fresh food / kitchen scraps.

Worms & Bedding Included



3

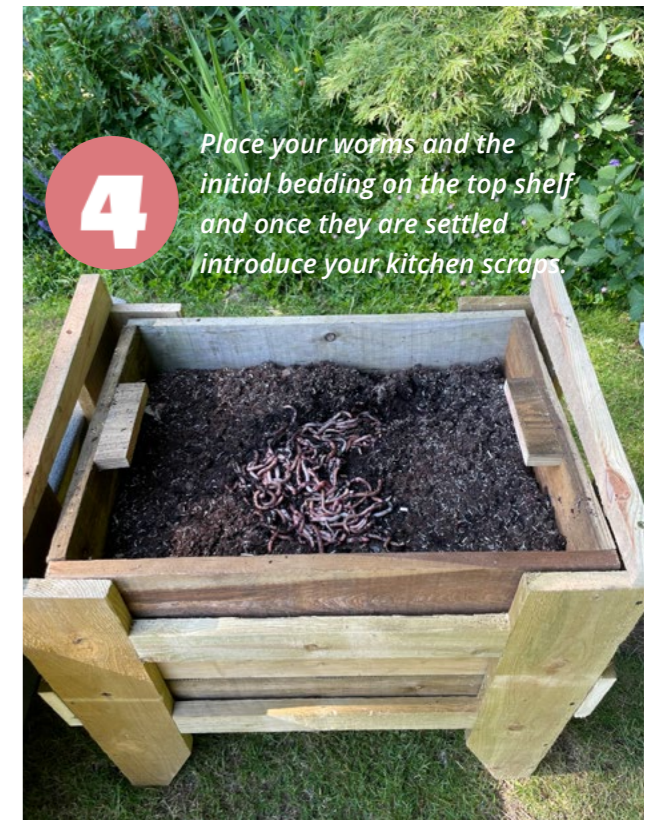
It is a good idea to place some paper over the mesh of the first shelf to help retain the initial bedding.

Treat yourself to one of the Worm Man's unique designed wormeries. Built to fit your garden.



5

Your wormery can be built to a size that suits you and your garden.



4

Place your worms and the initial bedding on the top shelf and once they are settled introduce your kitchen scraps.

How does it work?

The Worm Man's wormeries are made from wood, which is the best material for worms to stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.



When you receive your wormery the worms will be in the first compost tray of the wormery. You should give the worms a few days to settle into their new environment and then you can start to feed them your food scraps. The biggest mistake that people make when starting off a new wormery is to overfeed the worms; this can result in a poisonous environment and ultimately kill the worms, so make sure that you avoid this.

The bedding (soil) that they arrive with is the perfect bedding medium to get started but as previously mentioned you may wish to add a trowel or two of used compost or soil as this will immediately introduce various moulds, bacteria and creatures that will make the worms feel at home.

When you start to feed your worms, I suggest that you begin by giving them a small handful every other day. If possible, it is best to chop your food scraps into small pieces as this helps the worms eat them faster. By placing the food into different corners of the tray sequentially it will enable you to keep track of what food is oldest and you should see your worms feeding on the older food first (worms like it slightly mouldy). If after a week, you notice that none of the food has gone, then stop feeding them until you see the food being eaten. This will ensure that your food does not

go rotten and poison the worms in the initial stages. If they eat it all then you know to put in more food.

Once established and regular feeding takes place this tray will become full, when this happens you need to lower it in the wormery and place an empty tray on top. At this point you will have to add some bedding (soil) into the tray. You can do this by placing a few trowels of the soil from the old tray and mixing it with some soil (or compost if you have some) from your garden or a border.

From now on you should place your food in the new upper tray, but again be conscious not to overfeed initially as the worms will probably still have some food left in the old tray. Once the food in the lower tray has been eaten the worms will make their way up to the higher tray through the holes in the bottom of the tray in search of the new food. Remember, it is the worms that move, NOT the compost.

Once the worms have moved up into the next tray you will be left with the vermicompost (worm castings) in the lower tray. Don't be concerned if some of the worms remain in the lower tray, you can physically pick them out and place them in the higher tray if you want, or they can stay in your castings when you use them as they will continue to generate nutrients and goodness for your plants.

Looking after your Worms

I will always aim to have your worms in their bedding for a few days before you receive them, so they may contain some worm eggs (look out for small yellow lemon-shaped eggs). The eggs grow darker as the worms grow inside them and they can hold between 2 to 5 babies. However, it usually takes approximately three weeks for wormeries to become fully established as a breeding environment. Once established your worms will still start to breed and the more worms, the more you can feed them.

Please be aware that in the winter months your worms will not feed or breed as much due to the cold weather, so care should be taken not to over feed them in the winter. If it is really cold (below freezing), it might be worth moving your wormery into a garage or a shed. If this isn't possible, try making an insulated coat out of bubblewrap and wrapping it around your wormery. Cardboard, old carpet and paper also make great insulators and could be used in a similar fashion. Conversely, in the summer worms like to keep cool, so try to keep your wormery away from direct sunlight as you do not want to cook them! Worms are resilient and adaptable so don't worry too much as this is not an exact science, but their ultimate breeding and eating temperature is between 10 and 25°C. Reassuringly (and unlike many

others) the Worm Man's wormeries are made from wood, which is the best material for worms to stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

Worms need air to live as they breathe through their skin, so it is imperative that they maintain an air flow in the wormery. Whilst the Worm Man wormeries are designed with the maximum ventilation in mind, it is also a great tip to add damp shredded newspaper corrugated cardboard (egg cartons are excellent) to your wormery as this helps to create small air pockets.

Worms also need grit to help with their digestion, crushed dried egg shell works brilliantly or, if you have it, add a sprinkle of sand over the bedding occasionally. If you place eggshells on a baking tray while cooking it will dry them out and make them easier to break up.

It's also a good idea to put a sheet or two of damp newspaper over the bedding and place the food scraps under it when feeding. This helps to keep the wormery moist and dark and it also helps to keep those annoying fruit flies away.

You may have seen other wormery designs that have a sump and tap to release the liquid produced by the wormery. From experience, the Worm Man's wormeries are intentionally designed without this function. This is because the function only works well if the wormery is open to the elements (rain) or has a mesh part to its roof. Whilst this approach would seem sensible it can lead to excessive water in your wormery during heavy rainfall which could potentially drown your worms and freeze the bedding in the cold winter months. Therefore, the Worm Man wormeries require the owner to sprinkle water, as and when required, on the bedding trays to maintain the best environment for the worms. Don't worry, you can still get your liquid fertilizer from your wormery and the Worm Man can explain exactly how this happens.



How to Use Worm Castings



There are many uses for worm castings but here are the 'Worm Man's' recommendations:



Top Dressing: Use worm castings this way to fertilize existing plants and there's no mixing required.

Top dressing refers to the application of worm castings right on top of the soil. Just sprinkle a handful where the roots go into the ground and the nutrients filter down with watering and feed the plant. This is the easiest way to apply worm castings as it requires no measuring or mixing. This is also sometimes called side dressing, but the concept is the same. Every few months you add a handful of worm castings to the base of the plant; then every time it rains, or when you water the plant, a tiny bit of worm castings goes down into the soil. This will give your plants a regular delivery of organic vitamins and minerals, it's that simple!



Worm Castings are nature's best multipurpose fertiliser. Pure, living vermicompost



Amend Your Soil: Incorporate the castings into your potting mix.

Amending your soil with worm castings is done before planting (unlike top dressing, which is done after planting). To amend your soil, you mix potting soil or garden soil with the worm castings (I suggest a 50/50 mix) so that it is evenly distributed throughout. This way, the worm castings also surround the roots once they extend into the earth.

This type of application requires more worm castings to start with but enhances the overall structure of the soil. It increases the nutrition and the biology that's needed for healthy plants to grow.



Seed Starting Mix: Give your plants a boost by adding earthworm castings to their diet from day one.

Gardeners who take the time to grow plants from seed know that they require a tender touch, perfect sun exposure, water, and nutrients to grow into maturity. By incorporating a healthy dose of worm castings in proportion to the rest of your seed starting mix, you can give that little seedling a better chance of not only surviving but thriving.

Germination and seedling growth is improved by planting in high-quality worm castings as the good microbes in the castings can protect seeds from infection by releasing a substance that interferes with the chemical signalling between the host and the pathogen. Essentially, worm castings act like a shield protecting the seed from harmful components found in native soil.

Once you add worm castings to your seed starting mix, you'll see how easy it is to start growing any plants or flowers from seed.

Worm castings are a different because they are organic matter and contain bacteria and enzymes that are not found in compost.

4 Making Liquid Fertiliser (Worm Casting Tea)

Liquid fertilizer, (or as its sometimes known, Worm casting tea) is made by steeping worm castings in water—just like you would a cup of tea. As the worm castings soak, beneficial microbes multiply, creating a tonic that quickly delivers nutrients to the plant.

To make liquid fertiliser follow the steps below:

- Mix 1 part worm castings and 4 parts water in a bucket
- Let that mixture soak for 24 hours or more, stirring occasionally

Applying your tea: You can apply your liquid fertiliser with a watering can (I suggest that you remove the rose as it will block up) or you can strain it through some fabric (an old shirt works great) and apply it as a spray.



Take some worm castings from your wormery

Place them into a watering can (but remove the rose sprinkler)

Top up with water approx. 4:1 ratio then leave it for 24hrs and stir periodically.

For best results pour onto your plants or store in a suitable container

5 Rejuvenate Tired Soil

Don't throw out that old soil! Add finished organic worm castings to a pile of tired and depleted soil and watch it come to life again. In a matter of weeks, the microbes in worm castings will have done their magic by repopulating the soil, breaking down the organic materials and re-establishing that sad dirt into valuable organic living soil. When you feed your soil worm castings, your soil will pass the love on to your plants—just like mother nature intended!

One of the great things about worm castings is that they have a near-neutral PH which means that you don't have to worry about throwing your soil out of balance. If you've never tested your soil to see how it's reading you may want to consider giving that a try. Maybe you've wondered why your plants continue to struggle even though you've loaded up your soil with compost and fertilizer—it very well may be that your soil is out of balance! Thankfully, once you've achieved an ideal PH level, worm castings are a near fool-proof addition to your soil that will liven things up overnight.

It's hard to screw things up when using Worm Castings in your garden. Conversely, using synthetic fertilizers can go wrong as some cheaper options can be made with a whole host of random ingredients that can burn and harm your plants; in extremis some can also have a negative effect on your health. When dealing with high-quality, organic Worm Castings you can cast all those worries aside (pun intended).



A wheat seed grown in worm castings compared to one that was not. Note the root development

2 x Peri Winkle plants, one grown in worm castings, and one grown without.

The best and most natural medium for plant growth.

FACTS & TIPS

Some interesting Worms facts and Wormery tips:

Appetite

Worms can eat half of their own weight of food scraps each day.

Sunlight

Worms are photosensitive, so therefore they do not like light. This can be useful when looking for methods to separate your worms from castings.

Life span

Worms can live up to 4 years.

Body

A worm has an Anterior (head) and a posterior (tail) end and it has five hearts.

When the worm is about 2 months old it will produce a light-coloured raised band near its head called Clitellum. The Clitellum tells us that the worm has reached sexual maturity and this area is responsible for the formation of the cocoons that contain the baby worm eggs.

Eyes

Worms do not have eyes, they are very sensitive to bright light. They will try to hide as soon as they are exposed to it.

Mouth

On the tip of the head. There is a flap of skin called for Prostomium which stops things going into the worms mouth underneath the Prostomium is the worms mouth. A worms mouth is big enough to grab a leaf and drag it around.

Teeth

Worms do not have teeth

Movement

Worms have muscles all around their bodies and others that run the length of their bodies. When the circular muscles tighten up the body becomes thinner and longer. This movement squeezes the front of the worm forward. The other long muscles then squeeze together and help move the rear end of their body towards the front end.

Reproduction

Worms are hermaphrodites, so they can be both male and female. When mating, two worms join together with their heads pointing in opposite directions. Worms mature in about 8 weeks from hatching and will breed every 3 to 4 days throughout the spring through to autumn. Fresh worm eggs look very much like tiny lemons that darken in colour as the worm grows into eggs. Worms will self-regulate their population to the confines of the available space and the amount of food you give them.

Does it matter where I keep my wormery?

It can be kept almost anywhere. Worms prefer a temperature between 12 centigrade to 25. They are best kept where the temperature does not vary too widely; a shed or garage is suitable, and they do not require light. They can also be kept outdoors as long as they are kept in a sheltered position away from strong winds and out of direct sunlight. In the winter, it is advisable to insulate the bin which can be done with bubble wrap.

Does the wormery smell?

A normal wormery should smell earthy. Bad smells arise when food is allowed to rot which can lead to the environment becoming anaerobic. If you sense a bad smell starting you can help by getting your rubber gloves on and stirring up any uneaten food, this also allows the oxygen to penetrate. Stop feeding the worms and add some damp cardboard. If you continue to have a really horrible smell then it might be advisable to remove the rotten food (as it could poison your worms) and start afresh using a different food type.

Why are my worms in the lid of the wormery?

If you find that your worms are in the lid or stuck on the side of the wormery (anywhere except in the compost), it is possible that your wormery has gone acidic anaerobic. Worms do not like these conditions and they are trying to escape. If this happens, mix up the contents to introduce some oxygen into the soil and check the food that you have put in. You should avoid onions, peppers and citric fruit as these can irritate the worms. Again, add some damp shredded cardboard as this is a great neutraliser. You can also add crushed eggshells as these also act as a neutraliser and worms love the grittiness as it helps them grind up their food.

"My worms have all died!"

Unfortunately, this does sometimes happen, and it can be difficult to understand why. Here are some common reasons.

- Too much food-do not overfeed your worms, the food will just rot completely and possibly poison your worms.
- Too hot, too cold and too wet. Sometimes with the extreme British weather can cause problems but try to site your wormery away from direct sunlight and away from strong
- Insecticides and pesticides. Make sure that nothing comes in contact with your wormery that has pesticides or insecticides on it. Beware of cut flowers that have been treated!

- The wrong food types. Avoid onions, peppers and citric fruit
- No air! – If your wormery starts to smell, use a spade or your hands to give the contents a good mix up. If your wormery is inside, then leave the lid off and add lots of damp, shredded paper and cardboard to create air pockets

Can I collect the worms from my garden from my wormery?

In short No! There are many species of worm that are native in the UK, however, not all of them are composting worms. Compost worms differ from garden worms in that composting worms live and feed near the surface whereas garden worms (lobs) are deep burrowers. There are two main types of composting worms

1. Dendrobeana (Eisenia Hortensis) this is the largest compost worm and is reddish brown with stripes all over its body. This worm can tolerate acidic soils better than other species, Dendros also have a preference for damper conditions as it's the normal habitat they experience in the wild on the forest floor. These are the worms that you will get from the Worm Man
2. Tiger worms (Eisenia Fetida). This worm is smaller than the Dendros and is usually found in manure heaps. It has a very distinctive stripey appearance, hence their name.

Tiger and Dendrobeanas are both fantastic composting worms and they will happily live together.

How much waste will the system compost?

Worms can eat up to half their body weight every day and can double their population every 90 to 120 days. A tray will take approx. 3-4 months to compost depending on its size, the amount of worms and the conditions. Of note: this is about 4 times quicker than a compost heap that works by decomposing the material you put in it.

Worm Facts and Wormery Tips Continued...

Why are there flies in my wormery?

The flies you can see are probably fruit flies. They are smaller than the housefly (about 3 mm in size) and have brownish bodies. They will not harm the worms but they can be a bit of a nuisance when a cloud of them appear when you open up your wormery. As they feed on the same food matter that you'll be feeding your worms there's not much you can do to prevent them but there are a few steps you can take to bring them under control.

- Try to bury the food. The flies lay their eggs on the food, so if it is under a layer of compost they will struggle to do this.
- Try covering the wormery tray with a sheet or two of damp newspaper or even an old piece of material cut to size.

What else is growing in my worm bin?

You may occasionally notice patches of mould in your worm bin. Mould and fungus are a natural part of the composting process that help to break down food waste. Vegetables may sprout in your bin because of the nutrients present. These things will eventually be consumed by the worms and other organisms.

What are the other creatures in my worm bin?

Once your worm bin has been going for while you may notice other creatures like white worms, springtails and tiny white spider mites in your bin. This is normal. These creatures will not hurt your worms and they help the composting process.

Ants in the wormery

Ants in a wormery are a good indication that it is too dry. Dampen the compost and fork the nest regularly and the ants should soon move out. If the problem persists, try moving the wormery as ants follow a path and if this is broken the ants will not be able to find their way back to the wormery.

Beetles

Beetles can sometimes eat worms so should be removed.

Centipedes

A centipede's body has 15 or more segments with one pair of leg on each segment. Centipedes eat small worms, insects, larvae, small worms, and spiders. If you find them, it is best to try and remove them.

Slugs/snails

Some species are beneficial- however, some species will eat worms therefore remove them from your wormery.

Mites

Small white/red mites can appear overnight in their hundreds. They like moist conditions and therefore they may be an indication that your wormery is too wet. Add some dry newspaper and continue to monitor.

Spiders

Generally not a problem and they will eat the flies!

Springtails

Springtails are small wingless insects that jump when disturbed. They have a small springlike structure under the belly that catapults them into the air. Springtails feed on fungi, so whilst they are not pleasant they can aid composting.

Woodlice

Woodlice chew up waste and expel it like worms. An interesting fact is that woodlice eat their own faeces as they need the copper it contains. Leave them in the wormery as they aid the composting process.

Do worms die in the box?

Yes, dead worms, bodies decompose very quickly because their bodies are between 75 and 95% water. If you find any dead worms. You should find out the cause.

When it is raining, why do the worms like to gather in the lid?

You are observing the worms sensitivity to pressure change in the weather, they will often go up into the top of the wormery before it rains. This would naturally take them out of the soil and thus prevent them from drowning during flooding in their natural environment. Don't worry they will return to their food when the rain stops.

What if I go on holiday?

Worm sitters will not be required when you go on holiday as the worms will be happy munching away for a few weeks before they need feeding. If you have to go away for any length of time give them lots of shredded paper and cardboard and a good watering.

Can worms eat animal waste?

Yes, though certain rules apply. Chicken and other bird droppings are high in ammonia so it needs to age (ideally for at least 8 weeks) before they can be added to the wormery. This also goes for horse and cow manure. Amazingly, they love dog and cat waste, but it's important to make sure that these animals haven't been recently wormed. If they have it must age for 2 weeks before feeding to your worms.

What can I feed them?

Basically, anything that lived and died can be fed to your worms. The following is a list of foods that worms like:

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Coffee
- Tea leaves (not the nylon tea bag itself)
- Bread
- Rice
- Pasta
- Flowers
- Cereals
- Crushed egg shells
- Cakes
- Cardboard and paper
- Pet or human hair

The following foods should be avoided:

- Meat
- Garlic
- Onion
- Citrus fruits
- Oil
- Soap
- Grass cutting
- Anything that has come into contact with insecticides and pesticides
- Worms will also eat more if the food waste is cut into small pieces.

Handling worms and compost does not pose any known health risks. However, in the interest of good hygiene, Always wash your hands after handling.

THE WORM MAN

WORMS WITHOUT CONCERNS

The Highest Quality Dendrobaena Worms

~ Fishing Bait & Reptile Food ~

~ Worm Castings ~

Re-energise the Micro Biology of Your Soil

High Quality Organic Soil Conditioner, 100% Natural Fertilizer

~ Bespoke Hand Built Wormeries ~

Turn Your Kitchen Scraps into Worm Castings



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