Edible Gardens Workshop 3.

Worm farming and composting Organic pest and disease control

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Worm swag Set Up

Setup

1.) The first step is to give your worm farm a quick wash to make sure that there are no chemicals in it that might affect your worms. Dry inside.

2.) Put a couple of sheets of news paper in the bottom of the worm bin to stop the fine material falling out until the worm farm is established but still let the excess water drain out The worms will eat this paper later.

3.) Add moist bedding to the worm farm, make sure that you squeeze as much water **Worms like:** out of the bedding as possible it only has to be damp. I like to use shredded newspaper and cardboard to start a new worm farm but you can use aged manure, compost and old leaves or whatever suitable bedding that you have decided to use. Make sure that the bedding is not compacted but loose. If you have some worm compost or worm cast, I like to add a thin layer on top of the bedding.

4.) Gently add the worms to the surface of the bedding material. I like to start a new worm farm with a kilo of mixed compost worms. You can then add some food scraps to the worm farm and cover the food with bedding to stop pests and flies. I like to put a piece of damp Hessian on the surface of the worm bin to keep it moist and dark for the worms. Now leave the worms alone and let them settle into there new home only feed small amounts of food to start with until you see how much they are going to eat this will increase as the worm population expands.

Compost Worm Feeding

Requirements for compost worm feeding

Your compost worms will consume all your house hold organic kitchen waste and yard trimmings, as well as all your old news papers and scrap paper, you can also put all your pet waste [pet poo] in you worm farm and the worms will eliminate this for you as well without any smell or pest problems.

- Fruit peelings and vegetable scraps

- Tea bags

- Bread

- Rice

- Grass cuttings (after heat ing stage)
- Organic green yard waste (after heating stage)

- Animal manures (beware of worm medications)

- Scrap paper

- Newspapers.

- Napkins

- Soil or sand (To help with their digestive systems and provides a source of decom poser bacteria.)

If worms are not consuming a certain food, do not put in again.

Warning: If you are using animal manures, make sure that the animals have not been given any worm medication, as this will be fatal to your worms. We age all our animal manures for one month before feeding to our worm stock.

Worms don't like:

- All fatty foods (The oil can suffocate the skin breathing worms.)

- Onions

- Garlic

- Chillies

- Capsicums

- Any spicy foods

- Dairy products (will make your worm farm smell)

- Citrus foods

- Meat (Will cause flies and maggots and make the bin smell)

It is very important to only feed enough food for a couple of days at a time, when there is only a small amount left refeed the worm farm but in a different position in the worm farm. As your worm stock increase you can increase the amount of food that you are feeding.

Make sure that you keep an eye on the moisture levels in your worm farm, as some food has quite a lot of moisture. You might find that you will never need to add water if there is enough moisture in the food source.

Method of harvesting worm cast, vermi cast

Method one: Sifting with a coarse screen

The method that I like is when you have a pile of unprocessed worm cast on your plastic sheet (see previous description in part one.) I like to sort my pile with a sifter, I simply put a couple of hand full's of material in my sifter, give it a few shakes and all the fine worm cast will fall through leaving only the worms and unprocessed organic material in the sifter. I then tip this in on top of the material in the worm farm, It only takes a short time to do the whole pile and you end up with a very fine pile of worm cast for your garden and the worms and unprocessed material back in your worm farm. The sifter that I use is just a round container with a coarse screen in the bottom that the material falls through.