

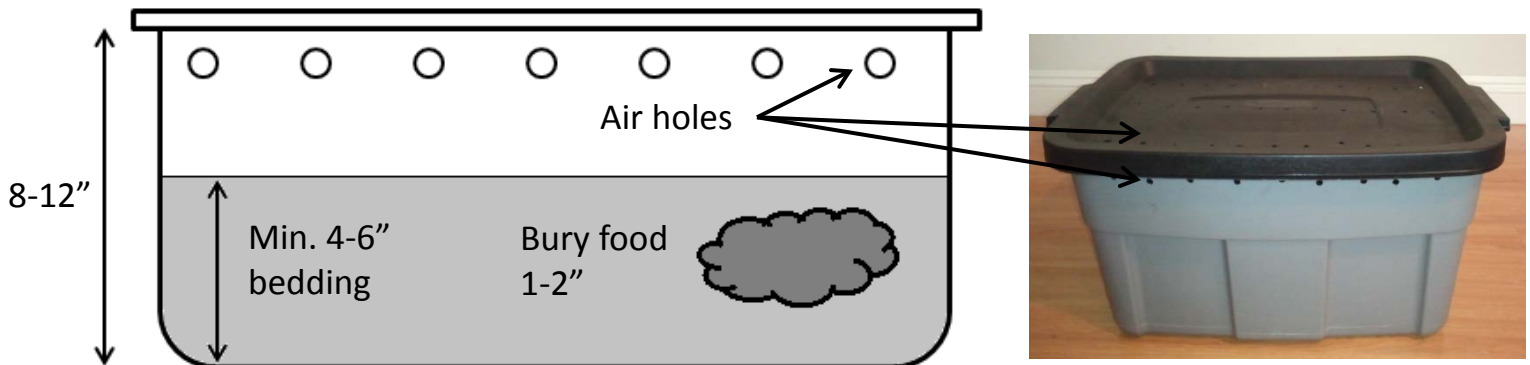
How to set up a bin

1. The **bin**:

- A 10- or 14-gallon Rubbermaid bin is cheap and easy to use. Commercial worm bins are also available.
- Drill $\frac{1}{4}$ " or larger air holes in the lid and along the top side. You can also cut ventilation slits with a box cutter. It is important that the bin be well-ventilated.
- Many people recommend drainage holes at the bottom, but I find this to be unnecessary and troublesome.

2. The **bedding**:

- Worms need a carbon-rich bedding. Popular materials include:
 - **Compost** – this is a composting worm's natural habitat. Just be sure to use relatively cold compost.
 - **Coconut coir** – the shredded husks of coconut are highly water-absorbent and make a fine bedding; available in hydroponics stores. Peat moss is similar to coir, but is non-renewable.
 - **Shredded newspaper** – this is a popular choice, but prone to clumping and rather unaesthetic.
- Fill the bin with at least 4-6" of bedding, and add water until it is as damp as a wrung-out sponge. I prefer a mix of compost and coconut coir.



What to Feed Worms

- Vegetable and fruit scraps.
- Coffee grounds (with filter).
- Used tea leaves and bags.
- Bread, pasta, baked goods.
- Eggshells.
- Green waste, compost, and aged manure.

What NOT to Feed Worms

- Citrus peels – these contain a chemical toxic to worms.
- Meat, dairy, and oils can cause strong odors and attract pests, but can be used in small amounts, with caution.
- Soaps, metals, and foils.
- Manure that may contain anti-worming medication.

Feeding your Worms

- Pull back a small amount of bedding, and bury food at least 1-2" deep. Adding a small amount of bedding with each feeding is also recommended.
- Food may be chopped or blended to increase surface area, causing it to degrade faster.
- A mature worm bin can handle $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 lb of food per day per thousand worms.
- A rule of thumb is that 1 square foot of bin surface area can support 1,000 worms.
- Immature bins should be fed less. Over-feeding is a common beginning mistake.

Common Problems and Solutions

- Fruit flies – flies are attracted to exposed food. Be sure to bury all food. You can also add a layer of shredded newspaper to further shield the bin.
- Bin is too wet – Be sure the bin is well-ventilated, add dry bedding, and be sure not to over-feed.

Where to Get Worms

- Online, e.g. at unclejimswormfarm.com.
- Glendale Worms, at 818.472.2593.
- CalRecycle: www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/worms/WormSupply.htm
- Your humble author, at 480.567.8810, or steffen.eikenberry@gmail.com.