

Tips for Container-style Worm Farms

A worm farm that has a bottom is a container-style worm farm. Containers are portable, and can be run indoors or outside – perfect for the garage or balcony. Containers also can catch the liquids given off from food & worms. Larger containers can be made of bathtubs!



Container-style worm farms can be in a single container, or several trays stacked up, with holes in the bottom floor to drain liquids and allow the worms free movement between trays. I like bathtubs elevated at working height, sloped towards the drain.

Some container-style worm farms drain liquids into a catchment box or bucket, perhaps with a tap for easy removal, or they can sit directly on the ground. Bathtubs can drip direct into a bucket, or filtered through a stocking or bag of pumice at the drainhole. Most commercial container worm farms are made of plastic.

Container –style worm farms can be a bit tricky to manage, mostly because the worm bed is not touching soil and the bedding tends to be more moist. The ecosystem inside may take more time to develop, and you must move trays around to make room for more food scraps. Castings need to be harvested regularly and the trays need to be moved around, to make room for more waste in the top feeding tray.

Here are some tips and tricks to using a container-style worm farm:

1. Fluff the bed regularly (they can handle the stir-up) to add air pockets.
2. Rotate feeding sites. Try burying food waste into a corner. Stop feeding the tray when you plan to harvest the castings (4-6 weeks later).
3. Add Garden Lime regularly, tsp per feed. Use calcium carbonate (ordinary garden lime) NOT dolomite or builder's lime.
4. Pre-rot food (cut it up, lime it, blanch it, soak it) before feeding the worms.
5. No meat, or large quantities of citrus peels. All fruit is okay, but do lime regularly. Coffee grounds are fantastic additions (just not too much in one go)!
6. Feed little and often - don't wait for the old stuff to disappear. Increase amt as worm colony grows in numbers (and the bacteria becomes more dominant).
7. In a stacking system, More than one tray is easier – giving you more room to add food scraps, and allowing older trays more time to properly decompose (which makes harvesting Vermicast much easier because the worms have moved on).
8. Remember, worms get all the credit, but it's the bacteria doing all the work...and worms eat the bacteria (isn't nature great!). Container style worm farms don't get bacteria unless it's added– Do this by adding a handful of healthy soil/compost/or vermicast. Cold temps slow down the bacteria development, so slows in winter.
9. If catching the liquid is not important (like during the winter), place the box with worms directly on soil (not a soggy spot). This controls temp, enables exchange of earth-bacteria, and allows natural drainage. Worms will stay where the food is.
10. In the winter, place your worm farm where it can get some morning sun, and where it's out of the wind. Move indoors if you want to speed things up.
11. Drainage is important – If the bedding seems overly wet, it may smell which indicates pockets with no air & poor drainage. To fix: Add garden lime and dry strips of newspaper and give it a stir (which adds pockets of air).
12. Place a piece of carpet or cardboard on top of the worm colony to block out light, give the worms some additional surface area and safe places to lay their eggs.