

COMPOST HEAPS & WORM FARMS ARE LIVING THINGS

The 'key' to great composting and worm farming is **A.D.A.M.**

ALIVENESS – There are big creatures you can see with your eyes like worms and beetles etc. and there are little creatures that you can't see with your eyes – you might need a microscope.

DIVERSITY - We need to eat as much variety of food as possible.

AERATION (air) - All living creatures need air.

MOISTURE - All living things need moisture. Water is life!

Composting is done by living things who love a variety of food like we do. They need to live in an aerated and moist habitat.

Compost Heaps

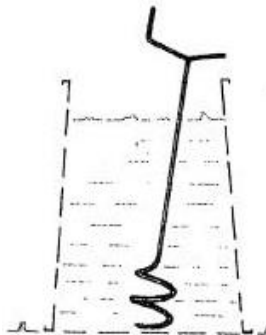
BREATHE – Worms & Minibeasts help a compost heap **BREATHE** as well as mixing & turning with a compost tool once a week at least, more often is even better

EAT – Food scraps & fine mulch are the things that compost heaps like to **EAT**

DRINK – Worms & Minibeasts all need water to **DRINK**



Compost Bin



Compost Mixing Tool

We are going to **DO** each of these for our compost bins so that we know how to look after them well and help them to **BREATHE EAT DRINK** properly.

- **BREATHE** – Use your spiral mixing tool at least once a week. If your compost smells ‘bad’ it’s not getting enough air.
- **EAT** – Composts like a special recipe to **EAT**:

ESSENTIALS = 1 container of FOOD SCRAPS and 1 container of FINE WOODY MULCH.

(You MUST add a sprinkle of Dolomite Lime EVERY week – about 1 teaspoon. A bit more if lots of food scraps are being added)

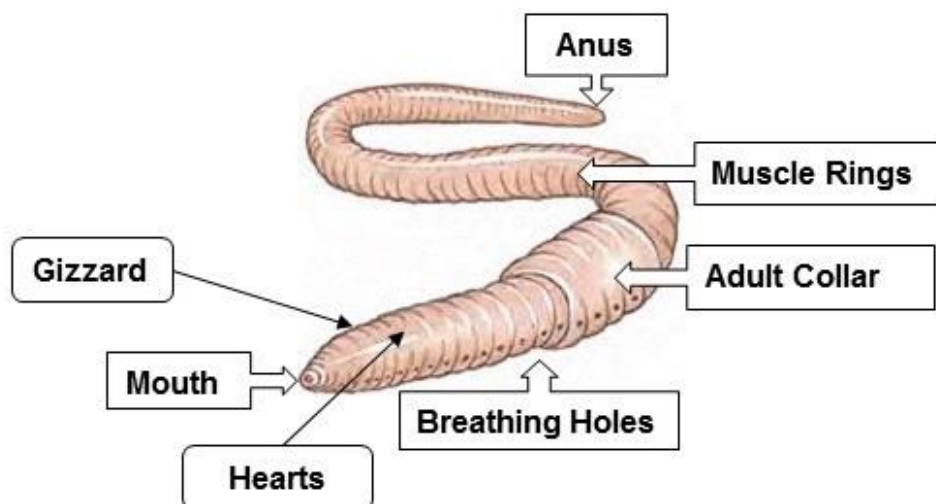
EXTRAS = You can add any of these to give your compost a VARIETY OF FOOD:



- **DRINK** – Water your Compost Heap once a week. HOW MUCH? Imagine if you picked up a handful of compost and squeezed it, you should be able to get a few drops of moisture out of it.

Worm Farms

Worms are in the soil, compost heaps and worm farms.



When you hold the worm can you see some of these features of its body?

BREATHE – Worms breathe through hundreds of holes in their skin and worms create holes in the soil that help the SOIL to **BREATHE**

EAT – Worms eat ORGANIC MATTER (food scraps/leaves etc) and turn it into soil. They need some soil to help them to GRIND their food which helps them to **EAT**. Soil is the worm’s ‘teeth’.

DRINK – Worms like it moist, so water your worm farm once a week at least. If they dry, they die!!! The Worm holes in the soil help the SOIL to **DRINK**

Some Worm Facts

- Worms have 5 hearts.
- An adult worm can produce 1 egg capsule a week – the egg is the size of a match head and has on average, 2 to 4 baby worms inside.
- Worms self-regulate their population.
- Each worm can eat half their body weight in fresh food each day and often worm farms contain 5000-10,000 worms (average – 1000 worms weigh approx. 250 grams).
- If its tail gets chopped off it will grow a new one.
- There are some worms in Australia that are longer than your teachers!
- Worm 'poo' (casting) is SOIL!
- Every worm is a boy and a girl – hermaphrodite.

Looking After Your Worm Farm



LID – the lid has ventilation holes to allow air to get in and out which helps the soil and worms to **BREATHE**

BLANKET – the blanket on top helps keep moisture in and keeps it dark for the worms – just the way they like it!

EATING TRAY – put a variety of food scraps here along with some soil so that the worms can grind the food scraps and **EAT** them

LOUNGE/SLEEPING TRAY – you'll see some worms in here, but most worms will be in the eating tray

SLEEPING/EXTRA OR SPARE TRAY – often we don't use this extra tray but if you did the castings (worm poo) in here is ready to go on your garden

COLLECTOR TRAY – this tray catches the liquid fertilizer that drains from the upper trays. Give it to your plants to **DRINK** but dilute to the colour of weak tea before giving it to your seedlings

BREATHE – Worms breathe oxygen through lots of holes in their skin so keep the tap open at all times on your worm farm to help it **BREATHE**. The blanket on the top of the worms should be made of a natural material to also allow air through so they can **BREATHE**. **Don't use newspaper as the blanket!**

EAT – Worms eat a variety of food scraps. Worms don't have teeth, so chop food up small and add SOIL on top of food scraps so that they can **EAT** more easily.

DRINK – Once a week add water until the liquid runs out of the bottom which you can collect in a bucket. You can dilute this with extra water, to a weak tea colour, and use it for your SOIL & SEEDLINGS to **DRINK**

Handy Tips

- Place your worms **IN A SHADY POSITION** - they prefer the dark and moist conditions
- **REMOVE THE TAP** (or keep the tap open at all times) and place a bucket under the hole to collect liquid so the bottom tray doesn't fill up with water, and the worms won't be able to **BREATHE**. **Empty Daily**
- The more **CHOPPED UP** the food scraps are, the quicker and easier it can be converted by worms - **EAT**
- If your worm farm smells 'bad', you are **OVERFEEDING** the worms. Mix & aerate the feeding tray by digging gently with a garden tool and wait a week to feed again - **EAT**
- **FLOOD** worms once a week and dilute liquid to the colour of weak tea, then pour some on your garden – **DRINK** (ensure the tap is always open to allow excess water to drain off – otherwise worms will drown!)
- Sprinkle some **DOLOMITE LIME** / Worm Conditioner once a week (1 teaspoon) to manage the pH of the system as most food scraps are **ACIDIC**