

Worm Composting Workshops

eco-cycle

Snapshot

Hosting vermicomposting (composting with worms) workshops and providing the needed supplies will encourage teachers and families to try composting in their classroom or at home.



<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective:

Participants will leave the workshop with a prepared worm compost bin and the basic knowledge to maintain it.

Age Groups: K-12th grade and adults

Setting: Cafeteria or other large room

Project Duration:

- Preparation: 2-6 hours
- Workshop: 2-2.5 hours (including set up)

Materials:

- Opaque plastic 10-gallon totes (1 per family or classroom)
- Power drill/bits
- Marker and ruler
- Spray bottles
- Newspaper
- Whiteboard
- Copy paper
- Printer
- Red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*) (optional)

Why This Project Matters:

Uneaten food and inedible food scraps (fruit peels, eggshells, etc.) add up to a lot of perfectly good worm food! Vermicompost, or the castings left behind from worms, is a natural, nutrient-rich soil amendment that may be used to nourish gardens, yards, and houseplants. Composting also reduces waste by preventing organic materials from entering the anaerobic environment of a landfill where they produce methane gas (a potent greenhouse gas) as they decompose.

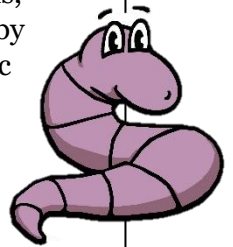
Project Summary:

While many people are familiar with backyard composting, vermicomposting is not as well-known. Hosting a worm composting workshop for the school community can be an effective way of sharing an alternative composting method that families can try at home. Vermicomposting can be utilized in almost any living situation, regardless of home size, location, or yard access (apartments, condos, mobile homes, etc.). In addition, teachers attending the workshop may be inspired to vermicompost in their classroom.

Implementation:

One month before the workshop:

1. Find a presenter to facilitate the worm composting workshop. This may simply be someone who has successfully maintained their own worm bin and can advise others on how to do the same.
2. Choose times and dates for the workshop. Offer an after-school session for teachers and a weeknight/weekend session for families.



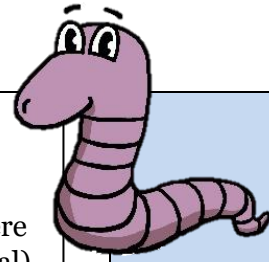
3. When workshop participants are given the tools to start a worm bin, they are more likely to follow through with maintaining one. Here are some ideas for getting supplies into the hands of participants:
 - Have supplies available for purchase at the workshop.
 - Obtain a grant/donation and offer supplies for free.
 - Offer supplies at a discounted rate if local hardware or garden stores sponsor the workshop.
 - Have a student group sell supplies as a fundraiser before or during the workshop (see Extensions).
4. Coordinate with the principal for a workshop location within the school (library, cafeteria, art room, or spare classroom). If the school is not available, inquire with community centers, libraries, or local businesses.
5. Advertise the workshops to the school community through hallway posters, in-school announcements, family newsletters, and website/social media posts. Invite a student group to help with these promotions. If desired, open the workshops to the greater community.
6. Coordinate registration for the workshop. Provide contact information for participants to register and ask questions. Requiring registration to occur prior to the event, and sending reminders closer to the event date, leads to higher attendance rates. This also benefits the coordinator when preparing workshop handouts and supplies.
7. Prepare and assemble worm bins for participants:
 - Purchase opaque plastic 10-gallon totes and lids (approximately 24"x16"x9") to be used as worm bins (one per participant, family, or classroom).
 - Before drilling, prepare an indoor area (or a tarp outdoors) to set up your equipment.
 - On the lids, use a marker and ruler to make two rows of six dots each. Make sure dots are evenly spaced. Using a 1/4 inch drill bit, drill holes into the 12 dots.
 - On the short sides of the bins, make two rows of three dots each on the upper half of the bin. On the long sides, make two rows of six dots each, also on the upper half of the bin. Drill holes into these dots.
 - When drilling is complete, sweep up all small shreds of plastic and dispose of them in the trash.
 - Create bedding for one bin by tearing newspaper into 1-inch wide (or thinner) strips. Sprinkle paper strips into a bin covering the entire bottom surface about 3-4 inches deep. This completed bin will serve as an example during the workshop.

Extensions:

- Create a fundraiser from the sale of red wigglers before or during the worm bin workshop. Have a student group coordinate between the worm farmer and participants. For example: if worms are \$10/lb., the student group could take orders for \$15/lb. Collecting orders prior to the workshop is beneficial so that the worms can be available to participants when building their bins.
- Provide directions from the internet on how to make a simple fruit-fly trap or make them as part of the workshop.

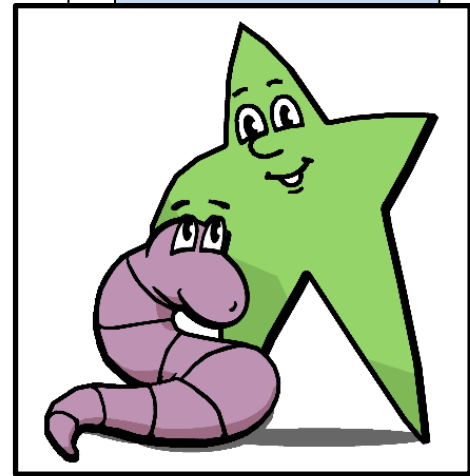


8. Assemble workshop supplies: information sheets summarizing procedures (see Composting with Worms, Chapter 23), drilled worm bins, stacks of newspaper, spray bottles, red wiggler worms (or information on where to buy them), hand-made fruit fly trap materials (optional), example of a newly completed worm bin, and an established worm bin with worms.



Day of workshop:

1. Assemble workshop supplies (handouts, worm bins, etc.) for easy distribution.
2. Arrange the workshop space with tables and chairs.
3. Create and display signage for the venue with directions to the workshop room or location.
4. Have the presenter facilitate the workshop to include the following:
 - Explain how worm bins were prepared.
 - Have participants prepare bedding from newspaper for their own bin. Demonstrate the right amount of moisture to add to the bedding.
 - Review and demonstrate initial bin set up, maintenance (including feeding and moisture amounts to add), harvesting, and troubleshooting.
 - Go over what can go into the worm bin (food scraps, nonrecyclable paper waste) and what can't go in (metal, plastic, and glass).
 - Provide information on how to order worms (if they are not provided).



Assessment:

Follow up with participants two to three months after the workshop. Ask if they are still using their worm bin and if they have any questions or concerns.

Related Activities:

Composting with Worms – Chapter 23

