Compost problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant odour</td>
<td>Too much food</td>
<td>Stop adding food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough air</td>
<td>Gently stir contents (aerate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too moist</td>
<td>Ensure proper drainage: check that the drainage</td>
<td>holes are clear, or drill more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>holes.</td>
<td>holes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many acidic</td>
<td>Cut back on acidic foods. Add a little dolomite</td>
<td>lime or ground eggshells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foods (citrus, coffee</td>
<td>grounds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit flies</td>
<td>Food left exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always bury food. Cover surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of bin with plastic sheet, old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>carpet, or sacking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too much food</td>
<td>Don’t overload the bin. If</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>problem persists, move the bin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to a location where the flies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>won’t bother you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symptom Diagnosis Treatment

Questions?
Call the Regional Compost Hotline at 604-736-2250.
Read Worms Eat My Garbage by Mary Appelhof.

Locate worm bins and workshops:
Your municipality may have worm bins or a workshop program available to you. You can also purchase a 53-litre storage bin and drill drainage holes in it, or build your own from scratch. Call the Regional Compost Hotline for help on finding a worm bin.

How to use your compost:

- **Fertilizer:**
  Use your finished compost as a soil conditioner in plant containers and the garden.

- **Make potting soil:**
  1/3 sifted compost
  1/3 soil
  1/3 vermiculite

- **Use the liquid**
  Diluted (one part liquid with 10 parts water) as a plant fertilizer. You can call this worm tea.

Here’s the Dirt: Worm Composting

It’s easy to compost with worms—we can show you how!

Composting replicates nature’s way of breaking down vegetation using worms, good bacteria, and other organisms.

Five great reasons to compost with worms

1. **Reduce your garbage**
   Organic waste (such as kitchen vegetable scraps and garden clippings) make up 30% per cent of the household garbage currently being sent to the landfill. Composting your organic waste is a great way to reduce this volume.

2. **It’s easy**
   Once your worm bin is established, adding materials and bedding become routine. Everyone in the home can participate and feel good about making a difference.

3. **Help the environment**
   Less waste means less trucks on the road, less methane gas generated from the landfills, and recycling nutrients back into the earth.

4. **Improve your garden**
   Your compost will help your garden soil retain moisture after rain or watering.

5. **Reduce use of chemical fertilizers**
   Keep local waterways clean by avoiding chemical fertilizers. Composting returns nutrients to the garden.

Use worms to reduce your garbage.
Great for apartments, offices, and students — year-round, indoors or out.

This publication is available online as a PDF.
Search for Worm Composting or its partner brochure, Backyard Composting, at www.metrovancouver.org

For copies contact the Metro Vancouver Information Centre at 604-432-6200
or email icentre@metrovancouver.org


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Composting with worms: 
7 easy steps

1. Fill your empty worm bin with a variety of bedding and two handfuls of sand or soil.
2. Add water to the bedding so its overall moisture level is like a wrung-out sponge. Ensure the container is half-full of bedding.
3. Lift the bedding gently to create air spaces. This helps control odours and gives the worms free movement.
4. Add the worms.
5. Add food scraps by pulling aside some of the bedding, dumping in the scraps, then covering the scraps with bedding.
6. Bury successive loads in different locations in the bin.
7. Harvest your compost in one to three months.

Harvesting your compost:
Worms work hard and fast. In three to six months, there will be little or no original bedding visible in the bin. The contents will be brown and earthy-looking. It is time to remove some of the finished compost.

The no-mess method
Push the bin contents over to one side and place new bedding in the space created. Place food scraps in the new bedding. Worms will gradually move to the new scraps, leaving the finished compost to be skimmed off as needed.

The some-mess method
If you want all of your finished compost at once, you must separate the worms manually. Most children love to help!
- Dump the bin contents onto a large plastic sheet under a bright light or in the sun.
- Make several small mounds on the sheet. The worms will hide at the bottom of each mound to escape the light.
- Scrape off the top of the mounds. Remove the worms and the tiny, lemon-shaped cocoons that contain baby worms.
- Mix a little of the finished compost in with the new bedding, and return the worms and cocoons to the bin.

What to compost:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green material (acceptable food)</th>
<th>Brown material (bedding material)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Kitchen scraps</td>
<td>✔ Leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Vegetable peelings and rotting fruit.</td>
<td>Shredded fall leaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Plant trimmings from your garden</td>
<td>✔ Newsprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves, old flowers, end-of-season greenery.</td>
<td>Shred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Coffee grounds and tea leaves</td>
<td>✔ Cardboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Eggshells</td>
<td>Cut some into small pieces or shredded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse and crush.</td>
<td>✔ Dead plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Vegetables and fruit</td>
<td>✔ Brown paper bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut into thumb-sized pieces for faster composting. Note: no salad dressing.</td>
<td>Shred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ EggsHELLS</td>
<td>✔ Grass clippings (dry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Fish, meat, bones</td>
<td>✔ Straw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Dairy</td>
<td>Chopped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Compost</td>
<td>✔ Grass clippings (dry)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unacceptable materials
- Grease, cooked food including rice or pasta, oils
- Fish, meat, bones
- Dairy

Well-tended worms make great compost.
Worms are living creatures with their own unique needs, so it is important to create and maintain a healthy habitat for them to do their work. If you supply the right ingredients and care, your worms will thrive and make compost for you.