

## Red Wigglers - Basic Worm Care

**Bedding:** 1. Shredded corrugated cardboard is our #1 choice for bedding because it holds moisture, resists compaction, and worms love to eat it. 2. Old dry brown leaves are also a great material for bedding, but mix them with cardboard. 3. Shredded newsprint or paper can also be used, but it compacts and require frequent re-moistening. Newspaper ink is safe for Red worms as it is soy-based. 4. Peat moss holds moisture well, but it provides no nutrients for the worms, and can be costly. 5. Coco coir is pH neutral, has excellent water retention, and does not foster mold. 6. Manure from plant-eating animals is a popular outdoor bedding. It often contains insects, but worms love it. NOTE: You will receive your worms in bedding with the grit and beneficial microbes that they need for breaking down food particles within their gizzards. DO NOT use potting soil or dirt as your main bedding for Red Wigglers. European Nightcrawlers CAN live well in gardens, raised garden beds, or composters.

**Container:** Red worms are not deep burrowers, so they do well in shallow containers that have a lot of surface area. Plastic concrete mixing tubs, bus bins, or dish pans are all economical choices. Plastic storage totes in the 10 to 27-gallon range have lids to keep out predators and keep moisture in. You do not need to drill holes in the bottom of your tote, but do make sure it has holes in the lid and/or sides. PRO TIP: Put a piece of plastic or bubble wrap or a sheet of moist cardboard or burlap on top of your bedding to keep it moist. Leave some room around the edges for the bedding to breathe.

**Environment:** Red worms must live in a moist environment because they breathe through their skin. 50-70% moisture is optimal. If you squeeze the worm bedding in your hand and water streams out, it is too wet. It should feel like a damp wrung-out sponge and shed no more than a few drops if squeezed, but it must be moist.

**Temperature:** Red worms tolerate a wide range of temperatures; however, the ideal bedding (not air) temperature is between 55-77°F. Bedding with a sustained temperature above 85°F or below 40°F can be harmful. Measure the temperature of the moist bedding inside the bin because it will differ from the temperature of the outside air. If your bin is kept outdoors, make sure it is shaded from the hot sun.

**Food:** Mushy fruits or vegetables are best. Corn cobs, melon rinds, avocado, banana peels, pumpkin, squash, celery, old bread, pasta, grains, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells, or citrus peels, are all suitable worm food. DO NOT feed meat, dairy, papaya, or pineapple (which is highly acidic). Citrus or onions should be fed in moderation. Non-biodegradable materials do not belong in a worm bin. Cat litter or dog feces should not