

## Worm Farming is a Fisherman's Friend

Red worms, red wigglers, or manure worms are said to be best for composting. They're also known as fishing worms. You can find them in leaf litter, manure piles, and bait shops.

The ability to produce fast makes these worms appealing for worm farmers and fishermen.

You can start your red fishing-worm farm in a small, cheap plastic container such as a margarine dish or cool whip container. Start with a small collection, say....under a dozen, just to get a feel for the journey ahead and decide if you want to invest further. Add at least one big spoonful of dirt or compost, some thin strips of notebook paper or newspaper (not glossy), a cup of water (you want moisture, not soggy contents), fine sand or crumbled eggshells, and a little cereal or fruit. (The worms aren't as partial to citrus fruits because of the acid content.)

You'll have to punch holes in the sides and the lid, at least a dozen in each. There must be oxygen flow and drainage. Worms can't survive without oxygen. And you may have noticed that they rise to the top of the ground after a hard rain.

Your worms will eat many things that you would normally throw away. Almost any food scrap will do, but there are some that are discouraged. Meat scraps, citrus scraps, garlic, onion, and hot peppers or really spicy foods are not good choices. You should be careful about exposing your worms to pesticide residues used on food or contained in manures. Although the fishermen's friend will eat cardboard because it's a wood product, make sure the cardboard is not contaminated with any poisonous residues. You have to feed them at least three times a week. Bury the food under the bedding for the best results.

You can check out bait shops to get an idea of how much to price your worms if you plan to sell them. You don't want to be too high or too low compared to other worms sold in the area for fishing bait. You can, of course, just grow them for your own fishing excursions. Also, consider the area where you live. If you live in a small area, there may not be enough market for a large worm farm to earn enough profit unless you sell over the internet or ship to other places. You want to make sure you don't invest too much too soon.

If you live near a lake, you may do very well with your worm farm business. People do like convenience. Even avid fishermen can run out of bait or forget to buy it, although they may not like to readily admit it! There are plenty of

people who prefer to use natural bait, too. Of course, this means customers will be knocking on your door on weekends and after normal work hours. So, you may do better to post your office away from your living area and make sure your hours are compatible, but not overwhelming for you. Post them plainly and large enough for those early rising fishermen/women to readily see them.