



# Encapsulated Compost Worm Cocoons

Encapsulated compost worm cocoons are an easy and convenient method of adding composting worms to your indoor or outdoor composter.

## Indoor Hatching Instructions

Encapsulated compost worm cocoons should be kept refrigerated until you are ready to hatch them. However, the sooner you start the hatching process the greater the hatching rate will be.

1. Place the encapsulated compost worm cocoons into a cup of water and let soak until the encapsulation material dissolves. (**Please note: Never use water from a water softening system, as the salt can kill the worms.**)
2. Once the encapsulation material has dissolved, empty the water and the cocoons into a kitchen strainer and gently rinse any remaining encapsulation material off the cocoons.
3. Spread out the washed cocoons onto a wet paper towel, then fold it in half and gently roll it up and place it in a sealable plastic bag. Store it in a dark, cool location. Another option, at this point, is to place the washed cocoons directly into the compost bedding material of an indoor worm compost bin either alone or wrapped in a paper towel as just described.
4. Initially check on the cocoons 48 hours after placing them in the sealable bag to see if any have started to hatch. After that, check on them every 24 hours.
5. Once you see newly hatched worms, take the rolled-up paper towel out of the bag, but do not unroll the paper towel. Place the paper towel and cocoons into your worm composter. (Please note: The worms are extremely small when they hatch. They start out white in color and gradually turn red as they grow. To start, only add as much food as they will eat in a week. As they grow and begin breeding, the amount of food you can process will increase.)

Most of your encapsulated compost worm cocoons will hatch in approximately 21 days. Hatch time depends on the temperature and humidity levels. The eggs inside the cocoons are in a state of diapause and some will continue to hatch months later. This is nature's way of ensuring their survival. The compost worms will mature in approximately 10 weeks. Each cocoon can hatch up to 10 worms. Do not add food to your worm composter until you are sure they have hatched.

(over)

## Outdoor Hatching Instructions

You can plant the encapsulated compost worm cocoons right into your compost pile by poking a hole in the compost or soil approximately 3 to 4 inches deep, placing the cocoon into the hole and covering it back up. If you are not able to "plant" your compost worm cocoons right away, keep the encapsulated cocoons refrigerated until you are ready to plant them. However, viability will diminish with time.

## Indoor Worm Composting Instructions

**Container:** Almost any container that keeps worms in and offers drainage and sufficient oxygen can be used for indoor worm composting. The basic worm box should be one foot high, two feet deep and three feet wide with drainage holes in the bottom. However, a variety of containers will do.

**Bedding:** We recommend a bedding of shredded newspaper and garden soil. Tear regular newsprint only (no colored pages) in strips approximately 1½ inches wide (some compost bins come with recommended bedding). Add about a gallon of garden soil and mix with water (**Please note: Never use water from a water softening system, as the salt can kill the worms.**). The bedding should be moistened to the "firm ball" stage--when squeezed, water droplets (but not streams) will fall and when released the "ball" will retain its shape.

**Food:** Compost worms will consume any kind of biodegradable matter except materials containing excess oil or chemicals. It is important not to add food until worms have hatched. It is also important not to overfeed. We recommended starting with a few small pieces of kitchen scraps, to determine if feeding is taking place. Once you are certain that the worms have hatched and are eating, you can build up on the amount of food offered. Suggested foods include fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells and any vegetable matter. To encourage decomposition, you may want to finely chop the materials before adding them to the bin. Avoid feeding meat, bones, salt, vinegar, cooking oils and dairy products as these items can cause a bad smell since worms do not process these foods.

**Harvesting:** Your worm manure should be ready to harvest in about two to three months. Push the finished contents over to one side of the bin. Add a batch of new bedding to the uncovered side. Bury garbage in the new side only and the worms will move to that side.

After several weeks, remove the old finished compost and add fresh bedding to the box until it is filled again. Repeat every several months.

**Species:** *Eisenia fetida* (Red Wiggler or Tiger Worm) with some *Eisenia andrei* (Red Tiger Worm).

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50 Count

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Gardens Alive!®, Inc.

4424 Dixie Highway

Fairfield, OH 45014

513-354-1483

www.GardensAlive.com



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