



The Wonder of Earthworms

Hillermann's
Kids' Club

Earthworms are more than fish bait and they could use a little more respect. These hard-working garden buddies are a gardeners best friend!

At this very moment, thousands of these little guys are busy making gardens healthy by digesting organic and mineral matter and making tunnels in the soil so air and water can move easier.



They eat the soil's organic materials and leave behind castings. (Castings is a polite, grown-up name for worm poop!) Castings are quite rich in nutrients and help to make the soil better for growing flowers or vegetables.

Look at your soil; if it is pure sand, heavy clay or soil starved for organic matter, it won't have many (if any) earthworms.

However, you can build your soil up by adding compost or other organic mulch and earthworms will move right in, making the soil even better. They will break down leaves, grass clippings, animal manure, and kitchen scraps into nutrients your garden can use.

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Turn this page over for some really cool facts about earthworms!

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Fun Facts About Earthworms

A single Earthworm will produce 1/2 a pound of soil a year!

- There is an estimated 50 thousand Earthworms in any given acre of ground. These same 50 thousand Earthworms produce approximately 18 tons of fertilizer (castings) per acre, per year!
- Earthworms produce their own weight in excrement (castings) everyday!
- Earthworms have 5 hearts!
- Earthworms are completely deaf but are sensitive to vibrations!
- Earthworms have no eyes, but can tell the difference between night and day!
- Earthworms breathe through their skin!
- There are over 3,000 species (kinds) of Earthworms!
- The largest kinds of Earthworms come from South Africa (*Microchaetus rappi* or the African giant earthworm); their average length is 4 ½ feet!
- Earthworms are actually a truer indicator of Spring than any other animal They don't appear until the ground thaws!
- Earthworms are nature's best soil aerators. The tunnels that they dig allow deep and even water penetration and air circulation!



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Earthworm Farms



What you will need:

A shoebox or other covered container
Black plastic bag to line box
Shredded newspapers
Soil to start the bin
Earthworms
Supply of moist kitchen scraps

What to do:

- Line your box with the black plastic. Put a thin layer of the shredded newspaper on the bottom of the box.
- Fill the box halfway up with soil and put a few worms the box. Say "Later dudes" to the little guys because they will start to dig in and head to the bottom of the box.
- Make sure the kitchen scraps are fairly small. You can tear them a bit and then add the scraps to the box for the worms to eat. Cover with dirt and put the lid on the box.
- Keep your worm home in a shady spot. Worms do not like sun or heat. You may want to mist the soil every other week or so and add shredded kitchen scraps from time-to-time. Your worm population should start to grow.
- Every few weeks take out the fresh castings for the garden or to use on your houseplants. As your worm population begins to grow, you can add some of the worms to the garden, too.



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