

VERMICAST

We recommend your vermicast is diluted 50/50 with peat and mixed with a little lime.

Why use vermicast?

This is a by-product produced when worms digest rich organic matter. Vermicast is high in humus and microbiological activity; this will boost soil structure and enhance moisture retention.

Where and when to use vermicast?

Use as a top dressing on container plants

Use as a seed raising mix

Use as a soil conditioner by working a thin layer into the soil

Revitalise old potting mix by mixing in 50% vermicast

Worm Composting is a cold process therefore any vegetable seeds that go through the farms may still germinate, we recommend that you only feed the worms weed free organic matter, therefore your garden is safe from outdoor weed germination.

Liquid Vermicast

This is easy to make and has the benefit of providing both foliar and general feeding for your plants. In addition to this your liquid vermicast will not contain unwanted seeds that may germinate in the natural vermicast form.

How to make your Liquid Vermicast

Mix one part vermicast to three parts water, then mix thoroughly, leave for at least 24 hours. Strain the liquid and use the sediment on your garden. Please ensure that you make only as much as you need, as the fertiliser is literally alive and will expire if not used or kept aerated. We recommend water dilution of one part to ten.

Warning: Always wear gloves and use in well-ventilated areas - there is evidence of potentially harmful bacteria in some potting mix/compost products.

The idea of using worms to break down organic waste is not new. Indeed, there are many small worm farms for just that purpose. Nor is the idea of using it as a fertiliser foreign. What is new, is the scale at which it is now being done.

On the 21st of April an Australian company, Vermitech, will open what it believes to be the world's largest worm farm. They also believe that they are the first in the world to offer this natural, efficient, pollution-free solution to the problem of the safe disposal of human waste ... in a way that is economically viable.

The Verimetch worm farm is attached to the sewage works at Redlands in south east Queensland. They process roughly 400 tonne of waste a week. It is fed to the worms in special purpose built beds, and it takes about 80 days for the waste to be completely converted to vermicast. This is then harvested from the bottom of the beds and is completely worm free.

The vermicast is being trialed on various crops including cotton, grapes, apricots and apples with some very interesting results. The research and trials are finding that the vermicast causes an increase in root development which means the plants are able to take up more moisture and nutrients. Phosphorous and potassium uptake is increased by 20 to 30 percent, while nitrogen uptake is lifted by up to 50 percent. The good news is that this increase in uptake will eventually show itself in an increase in yield. Research also reveals a rise in the level of fungi and bacteria that naturally occur in healthy soil.

While it is early days and there are still some concerns, vermiculture certainly seems like a cleaner, greener way to deal with the universal problem of waste disposal. All that remains is a question of balance. Balancing the benefits against the cost of production. When these two issues are near equal, farmers will reap the benefits.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Undoubtedly, the most common emails are:

I want to find out all about worm farming- what can you tell me (for nothing!)

How do I get started?

Is there any money in worm farming - what are the costs to set up?

There is of course plenty of variation on that theme, but it all comes down to the same thing.

We'll give you some information to cover these, but please remember you need educational material you can refer to regularly. Any business needs a lot of knowledge to go into setting it up and running it successfully.

The videos that we promote "A Practical Guide to Worm Farming", parts 1 & 2 cover every aspect of the industry. They are packed with useful information and money saving ideas which guide you from the initial thought of beginning a worm farm right through to being able to set up a waste management project. Practical experience along the way is essential and there will never be any substitute for that.

HOW THE WORM CAN TURN YOUR WASTE INTO AN ASSET

Worm farming, or vermiculture, is being recognized world wide as a cheap and effective method of dealing with a waste problem and converting that waste into a very valuable resource.

With the Environment Protection Act being enforced for businesses with regulated waste, worms are an excellent option to consider. Compost worms can turn 2-3 tonnes of organic waste (manures, green waste, food etc) into 1 tonnes of nutrient rich vermicast which can fetch up to \$200 on the open market today. Many farmers, however, are choosing to use the vermicast back into their own land, often in a liquefied form, to cut fertilizer costs and improve the quality of the land. This is sound, sustainable agricultural practice.

For the householder, worms can convert kitchen & garden waste, dog manure, cat litter, cardboard etc. into vermicast, reducing the amount of waste destined for land fill and reducing the use of chemical fertilizers. As a result, our gardens become a healthier place as native worms are encouraged back by the organic soil where they live happily.

As a worm farmer, you would be expected to promote this attitude.

There are a wide range of products available to help make your business profitable and allow householders or farmers to convert their waste easily.

The product that we endorse for householders is called "[The Swagú](#)" - it is a very easy to maintain unit that does not create problems for people who are unfamiliar with the technical side of worm farming.

Many unsuccessful worm farmers come and go because they have been limited in thinking to selling worms only. The secret of a successful venture in worm farming is to understand the range of products available and the absolute benefits of using the by-products.

Saleable items are:

- * *Compost worms*
- * *Bait worms*
- * *Vermicast Solid & liquid*
- * *Worm containers / composters e.g. The Swagú*
- * *Large worm beds or modules for commercial use*
- * *Books & Videos*
- * *Motorized harvesters & other machinery.*
- * *Project management*

This is not a complete list, but gives you some idea of the scope available.

Setting up costs will depend on the size you intend to be, land available and your aims.

Bed costs can be virtually nothing for windrows if you have plenty of land, to thousands of dollars for several elaborate above ground units. All sorts of middle price range beds are available, particularly if you can make them yourselves. We favour starting with little expense in accessories, mainly putting your money into breeding stock while you are learning. Make sure you enjoy what you are doing, can make some money and

that you are capable of maintaining the labour required THEN spend a little more on "comfort" items.

Stock costs will vary depending on where in the world you are.

Our wholesale price is A\$35 per kg for compost worms (US\$20 per 2.2lbs). We export all over the world, sometimes by the ton, as this is a very good price.

You will need a source of bedding and feed. Aged horse manure is good for bedding, mixed with Lucerne or hay if available.

Other animal manures, cow, pig, horse, sheep make good food sources on a commercial level, or just grass clippings, food waste, paper & cardboard if you are unable to use animal manure in your setting.

A flat sorting table and a good set of scales are the only really essential items when starting out. You will undoubtedly start to sell the odd 1,000 worms here and there before any paid advertising begins, as friends and neighbours will want to add worms to their compost, or take a few on a fishing trip.

Grow them for at least three months before you decide which path to take. It is not for everyone, but can be a very relaxing, stress relieving way to spend some time for many people.

We look forward to hearing back from you with any more specific questions, or to order your video(s), which we are pleased to offer with a satisfaction guarantee. If you don't believe they are good value, we will refund your money.

