

# HAPPY WORM HABITAT: *Hawaiian Style*

## Ingredients

**Bedding & Cover:** Newspaper, cardboard, office paper: *long shred-1" wide- or less strips, separated & fluffed up*  
**-Carbon-** - **PLUS** - Coconut Fiber Coir\*  
*\* rehydrated in water \**

**Worms:** Red Wigglers & Indian Blues packaged in microbe rich medium

**Habitat:** Size based on quantity of food scraps & *harvest method*  
- *1/4" Ventilation holes in the lid & in the bottom of Basic Bins*

**Catchment tray & props:** To catch "leachate" \*\* For Basic Bin \*\*  
To allow "leachate" to drain away from your habitat  
*leachate (liquid produced by decomposing food & watering)*

## Set Up

- Step 1.** Place habitat in a shady, cool area away from afternoon sun: heat from direct sun kills worms.
- Step 2.** Fill bottom of your habitat with soaked shredded paper & Coir bedding  
*You want this layer to be fluffy & look like air can flow through it when it's wet (3" for basic bins, 2" for Cafés and stacking trays).*
- Step 3.** Mix worm "bed run" medium into the bedding.
- Step 4.** Add the worms. (No need to separate them)
- Step 5.** Add food: See notes below about food "preparation" & quantity.
- Step 6.** Add 1-2" wet *shredded, fluffy paper* cover. Close the lid.  
*You want this layer to look like air can flow through it when it's wet*
- Step 7.** Prop Basic Bin up over catchment tray.

## Regular Maintenance

*During the 1st 2-3 wk "settling in" period: 1) feed 1/2 the suggested amount; 2) worms tend to migrate to the catchment. If you ever see large clumps of worms in your catchment, water more or call me.*

### **Feed, water, and care:**

#### **- Feed regularly!**

- 2-3x/ week is optimal, using the "Right & Left" Method helps you monitor conditions in your habitat
- Always maintain a thick cover layer and feed under it
- **Do not wait** until all food is gone before feeding again, if there is odor- feed a small amount, water, & let the worms catch up.
- Monthly increase the amount of food given- if there is no odor after 3-4 days, make this the new amount to feed. If there is odor, try a little less, but try to increase from your previous amount. ***Under Feeding is incredibly common and is harmful to your growing colony.***

#### **- Water regularly!**

You want saturation all the way through, with excess leachate draining out-  
*Basic bin- 1 pint to 1 quart/wk. Café- 1/2 to 1 gallon/wk.*

Do not allow your cover layer to dry out, this will slow down the process.  
Worms need moisture.

*Jute^ blankets are great for retaining moisture and not blocking air flow*

- **Water excessively! \*\***

1-2x/month – to pull essential oxygen into the cast forming below.  
*1-2 gal for a Basic Bin. 3-4 gal for Café.*

- **Use Leachate.**

Dilute drained “leachate” to feed your plants. Most plants love leachate!  
*For low growing vegetables- water at least 2 ft. away from plants.  
Too frequent or too strong can be over fertilizing, so dilute till you know your plants.*

- **Maintain 1-2” shredded paper cover.**

Fluffy, wet cover deters odors and flying insects, and keeps worms happy.

- **Harvest the vermicast (worm poop) regularly!**

The first batch of cast is ready for harvest in six months.  
Harvesting 2-3/year will assure that your worms are happy.  
*Not harvesting & not feeding can cause your worms to die off.  
Harvest methods found on “Harvesting your Vermicast” handout*

Basic Bin monthly maintenance:

-1-2x/month: add coconut fiber to the existing “cover layer”, next add food, finish with a new cover layer of shredded, moist & fluffy paper  
*You are creating a “lasagna” effect of layers of carbon (paper & Coir) with air pockets between the layers of food.*

Useful tips

- Worms can eat up to their weight in food daily. However, during the 1st 2-3 weeks cut portions in 1/2. Your system does not have much “life” yet.
- Chopping food scraps into small pieces, allowing at least 1-2 days of decomposition, and ample watering speeds along the breakdown & consumption which will help deter odors & flying bugs.
- Save food scraps in closed container(s) in fridge, freezer or countertop.  
*Thaw to room temperature before feeding.*
- Egg shells: Rinsed, “sterilized”, & finely crushed.
  - Feed about 1x/month
  - Worms need the grit & benefit from the calcium in eggshells.

- **Do not feed:**

Papaya **seeds**, dairy products, meats, peanut butter, fats & oils, onion & garlic, vinegar or very salty foods, thick yard cuttings.

“No glossy, magazine pages or NCR paper.” *Ask about animal feces.*

- **Limit:**

- Citrus rinds, Coffee grounds-*better yet, put grounds around your plants*
- Nuts & Pulp of nuts- almond, coconut, etc.- *add small portions at a time*
- Starch & Rice: *Break up rice, otherwise it clumps & hardens and will not be eaten. Limit the amount of starch in a feeding by mixing in small amounts with fruits & veggies*

*\* Coconut fibers are excellent for retaining both water and air, both in your worm habitat’s “carbon layers” and in your potting soil. Worms love it!*

*\*\* Excess water pulls air into the layers of cast forming in your habitat, maintaining an “aerobic” environment.*

*^ Jute Blankets are made of renewable, durable & low impact grass fibers*

*Food creates heat when decomposing. Worms stay away from "hot spots" letting other organisms start the decomposing process before they begin to consume food, this is why I prefer alternating left then right when feeding.*

***With good care & feeding,  
your worm population can double in approx. six months.  
Good Care: feed ample amounts regularly, keep moist, maintain a wet, 1-2"  
shredded paper cover and harvest regularly.***

***Monitoring feeding:***

***Too much? It will smell because it's taking too long to process  
Smell can also indicate that something too big is in the habitat.***

***Too little? The cover layer is shrinking away from the edges***

*Directions for harvesting are available from Kokua Worms.*

***Visit or contact Kokua Worms with any inquiries or questions.***

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