

Waste to wonderful

Home Composting

Kitchen scraps and garden waste make up a large part of household waste. In landfill, organic waste releases methane, a major greenhouse gas. Composting is a great way to keep your kitchen and garden waste out of landfill, feed your garden and save money.



The compost process uses air, moisture and heat to convert organic material into carbon-rich soil. If you stick to a few simple rules you'll have excellent compost for your garden, or to give away if you don't need it – check out sharewaste.org.nz for details.

You can buy a compost bin from local retailers (check out which ones offer our Council subsidy on both Councils' websites - search word: compost) or make your own out of any materials you have to hand, such as pallets or untreated wood.

Check out our video on how to get started home composting along with more information on what to do with food and garden waste. It's on both Councils' websites ([search word: compost](#)).

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TOP TIPS

For composting:



Top tip 1

Layer "greens" (nitrogen: food scraps, coffee grounds, garden waste, seaweed, manure, etc) and "browns" (carbon: drier woodier materials like straw, dried leaves, wood ash, egg cartons, shredded cardboard and paper, untreated saw dust, etc). Each layer should be five to 10cm deep. Cut things small to speed up the process.

Top tip 2

Variety is great to make good compost so use any food scraps except for meat, dairy and oil.

Top tip 3

Compost heaps need moisture – water each layer as you go and keep the bin or heap covered. Once your bin is full or your heap is about one metre high, leave it covered to mature but check occasionally that it's not too dry.

Top tip 4

Speed up the process by keeping your bin or heap aerated, for example by turning it with a fork. The more you do this, the quicker it will compost. Compost is ready when you can't see what it was and it looks dark and crumbly.

Top tip 5

To make sure you have enough browns (it's good to have more browns than greens where possible), hang on to your cardboard and paper, or dry materials like straw.

Top tip 6

If you're worried about rodents, cut out a piece of chicken wire larger than the bin base, place under the bin and curl the sides 10cm up the side of the bin.

Top tip 7

Keep tricky invasive weeds (and those that are seeding) out of your bin so that you don't end up spreading weeds with your compost. Also avoid cat and dog feces if you are using your compost to grow food. Large woody pieces like bamboo and cabbage tree leaves also don't compost well.

Top tip 8

Stay safe when handling both domestic and commercial compost (it can contain legionella bacteria which can cause serious respiratory disease). Wear gloves and a properly fitted mask and only handle compost in well ventilated areas, preferably outdoors. Open bags of soil products slowly and dampen down before use. Always wash your hands when you've finished.



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Worm Farms

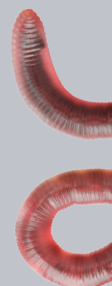
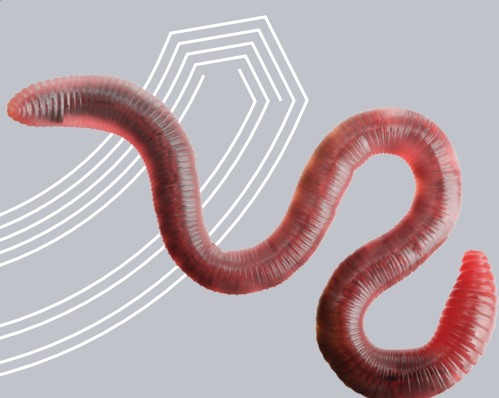
Kitchen scraps and garden waste make up a third of household waste. In landfill organic waste releases methane, a major greenhouse gas. Setting up a worm farm at home is a good way, both to keep your food scraps out of landfill, and also feed your garden. Worm farms are great when most of your organic waste is food scraps.

Worm farming isn't highly technical but worms do need a little care and knowledge to keep them happy and alive. The worms best suited to worm farms are tiger worms (*Eisenia fetida*) as they are adapted to eating decomposing organic materials.

Worm farms produce vermicast which is black gold for your garden – add it to compost or potting mix and use when planting seedlings or to fertilise existing plants.

There are lots of different types of worm farms to choose from – check out both Councils' websites ([search word: compost](#)) for which retailers offer a Council subsidy. Worms can also be purchased locally with the subsidy.

Give your worms time to settle in and grow their numbers over the first few months. Don't overfeed them. Put in food scraps every few days but don't add more until the previous batch has been eaten.



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TOP TIPS



For worm farming:

Top tip 1

Worms love most fruit and vegetable scraps, as well as coffee grounds, tea, shredded paper and cardboard, crushed eggshells and vacuum cleaner dust. They do love carbon so use lots of shredded cardboard, paper and wood chips from deciduous trees.

Top tip 2

Worms don't like citrus, onions, spicy food, too much cooked food, mouldy bread, garden waste or shiny paper.

Top tip 3

If uneaten food is building up, reduce feeding until the worms catch up and remember to chop your food scraps up (worms have very small mouths).

Top tip 4

Monitor for moisture levels – your farm should be moist but not wet. If worms are climbing up the side it may be too wet, so add more paper or dry leaves and check there isn't liquid to be removed from the bottom.

Top tip 5

Keep your worm farm's pH balanced by adding a sprinkle of lime once a month. If you find small black vinegar flies around the worm farm, gently fork over the top layer, sprinkle on lime and cover with a damp tea towel. If you find you have heaps of little white worms, add some white bread overnight, then remove the bread with the white worms the next day and sprinkle the worm farm with lime.

Top tip 6

Don't let your worms overheat or freeze – move your worm farm into the shade in summer and into the sun in winter, near a north-facing wall. Put an old blanket or carpet over the farm during frosts. A range of 10°C to 30°C is OK.

Top tip 7

Add your vermicast to compost or to fertilise existing plants. You can also make "worm tea" with a kilogram of vermicast to 10kg of water. If your water is chlorinated let it sit for a day before adding the vermicast.

Top tip 8

Any liquid caught in the bottom tray comes from your scraps – you can tip it back into the farm to keep moisture levels up (if you're getting a lot of liquid increase the amount of cardboard, paper or wood chips).



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Bokashi

Kitchen scraps and garden waste make up a third of household waste. In landfill organic waste releases methane, a major greenhouse gas. Running a bokashi bucket at home is a great solution, particularly if you don't have space to compost (and if you don't have a garden you can give your bokashi scraps away to local composters through sharewaste.org.nz).

Bokashi originated in Japan. It uses a bran-based mix inoculated with 'effective micro-organisms' (EM) which, when layered with food scraps, helps process them into a nutrient rich material that can then be dug into the garden or mixed into compost. Bokashi can help transform your garden soil into a rich, fertile growing medium for your vegetables and plants.

Bokashi is a double bucket system which can fit easily under worktops. The magic ingredient is the EM, which is sprinkled on top of food scraps each time you put them in. You would usually have a couple of bucket sets – one in use, and one waiting to be used once the contents have finished the process and been buried in your garden (or given away). Because your food scraps are pickling rather than composting using this process, they will probably still look recognisable – they will break down rapidly releasing lots of goodness when they are buried.

Check both Councils' websites for information on a subsidy to buy bokashi buckets and where you can buy them (*search word: compost*).

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TOP TIPS



For Bokashi:

Top tip 1

Only fill your bucket every one to three days. Add a sprinkle of EM, including in the bottom of the bucket when you start, as this is an anaerobic system which should be exposed to as little air as possible. Keep your bucket out of direct sunlight.

Top tip 2

As the bin fills use a potato masher or similar to compact the food and squeeze out air pockets. Cut your scraps into smaller sizes to help the process.

Top tip 3

Bokashi doesn't work for paper (although a little bit is fine), garden waste, liquids, oils, bones and shells.

Top tip 4

When your bucket is full, add a double pinch of EM and put the sealed bucket in a warm place like a hot water cupboard for about 14 days.

Top tip 5

Once your bucket has rested, it's time to bury the contents. Ideal places are your veggie garden or anywhere you want to grow something – just add some carbon rich materials like straw or shredded cardboard to mix it up a bit. Cover the buried materials with about 30cm of soil. You can also dig it into your compost heap for great results.

Top tip 6

Bokashi juice has lots of uses. You can dilute 200:1 to feed your plants and trees. Dilute 100:1 to feed your compost heap. A mix of 500:1 is good for foliar sprays, for example for tomato plants. Finally pour it neat down your household drains, sinks or toilets – it will help eat some of the grime in your pipes.

Top tip 7

If your bokashi bucket develops an unpleasant smell, make sure the lid is very well sealed and take off the liquid (the liquid is the likely cause of a smelly failure). Don't add rotten or mouldy food.

Top tip 8

White mould is fine but black, blue or green mould is a sign that all is not well – bury the contents with some extra EM sawdust in a spot you won't disturb for a while.

