

The background of the entire image is a close-up, macro photograph of a worm farm. It shows a dense layer of dark, moist soil and organic matter, with several reddish-brown worms visible, some in the foreground and others in the background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the soil and the segmented bodies of the worms.

THE LITTLE WORM FARM'S

WORM STARTER MIX

AN EASY WAY TO START A
WORM FARM

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The Problem

Composting worms are commonly sold by the weight or by count. The result is an unnaturally high density of worms being packed up with a relatively small amount of (usually lifeless) bedding material, such as peat moss or coco coir.

Not exactly an ideal situation for the worms. By the time they reach the customer (assuming they survive the trip), it's almost inevitable there will be some mortalities – and, bare minimum, the worms are going to be stressed and very often restless in their new environment.

I've recently seen less of the small containers of that kind, I think stores have noticed their shelf life isn't long enough and people are fed up with buying a box of half dead worms. I noticed large boxes advertising 1000 worms coming with a much better bedding material which also acts as a slow release food. But I'm questioning the health of the worms that are kept on the shelves without maintenance in a non air conditioned warehouse especially in the summer. But do you need 1000 worms to start a worm farm anyway? Not really... I have personally managed to start a worm bin with just 50 worms I only waited 6 months to get a worm farm running at decent speed.

This goes hand-in-hand with the other widely-spread myth that worms will eat their weight in waste materials every day. Yes, there are situations where that is possible (even greater feeding rates than that!), but rest assured, 99.9% of the time it's not something the average home vermicomposter can realistically expect – especially when just starting out with a brand new system!

Before heading to the next page, lets play a little game: guess how many worms are in the pile photographed above. Photos courtesy Larry J. Shier

BUYING WORMS BY COUNT

So you have bought 1000 worms, how will you verify the count? Most worm sellers will not count 1000 worms one by one and package them, especially not the ones that sell to big stores by the hundreds of packages. They do an estimate by weight or volume. There have been reports of people receiving much less worms than what they have ordered. But rare are customers who really take the pain to sit down, separate the worms from the bedding and count. And it is really easy to overestimate the number of worms in a pile.



How many worms have you guessed were in the pile photographed on the previous page? The answer is: 250 worms. How close were you to the correct answer?

BUYING WORMS BY WEIGHT

Buying by weight is better than buying by count as at least verifying the weight is easy. However, you still need to separate the worms from the bedding material they come with. Again, most of us don't really want or have time for that and will simply dump the content of the package into the worm farm.



I'm not suggesting that buying by count or weight is a bad thing, this is just to highlight the fact that the numbers are often estimates. So if you don't really care about specific numbers then go for it. However, prefer buying from a local farmer than from a store where you are unsure how long the worms have been waiting for you on the shelves. **You are helping support a family, not paying a CEO's vacation.**



Worm mixes

When starting a worm farm at home, it is not required to buy a lot of worms because even a fully operational worm farm will unlikely be enough to compost all your food waste.

New worm farmers often overfeed their worms which leads to a lot of issues including but not limited to:

- foul odours
- muddy worm castings
- mass escaping or dead worms

It is one of the 10 biggest mistakes done by the beginner. See the other mistakes from this eBook: [10 Biggest mistakes new worm farmers make.](#)

This is mainly due to the popular belief that worms eat their weight in waste per day. While this is possible when all ideal conditions are combined, in practice this is almost impossible to reach let alone to maintain. In average worms will eat their weight in food waste and the same amount in bedding material (cardboard, newspaper, egg boxes etc...) per week. So if you generate 1kg of food waste per week you will need 1kg of worms which is between 2000 and 4000 worms.

So as you see what ever the number of worms you are initially using to start your worm farm, you will probably not be able to use them to compost all of your food waste

The Worm Starter Mix by thelittlewormfarm.com



so why get fixated with numbers? Just start small and let Nature do her thing.

Being one of moderators of the [Red Worm Composting Facebook group](#), which counts (at time of writing this document) 7000+ members, I have seen a lot of success and failures. Amongst reported failures were beginners complaining all their worms have escaped, are not showing any real interest in the food scraps or have died not long after adding new worms to a new bin.

Interestingly, I saw more success stories from people who have started their second worm bin by populating it with half the content of the first one. And guess what, the worms thrived almost instantly. The worm population would grow very quickly. This was partially due to all the countless baby worms and cocoons the worm farmer didn't even realise had been in the content that has been transferred to the new bin. But it was also simply a case of the worms doing what they do best – rapidly expanding in number to take advantage of a high quality, organic-waste-rich environment.

It's in their very nature.

Red Worms (and other composting species) are "epigeic" earthworms, meaning they live near the soil surface – often above, in fact - in deposits of rich organic matter (eg. an old horse manure heap or compost pile).

This means they are much more exposed to the elements, and their habitat can deteriorate much more rapidly than that of a deep-burrowing soil worm. So they need to be a lot more tolerant of a variety of environmental conditions, and they need to be able to grow and reproduce very quickly, in order to help ensure the future success of their population.

When you put these basic principles to work in a home system, "magic" happens!"

THE WORM STARTER MIX

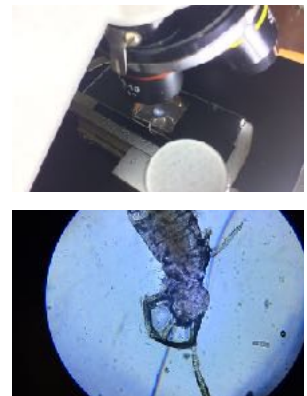
My Worm Starter Mix takes this concept and is a cost effective way to get compost worms. It can also make it a lot easier to set up a healthy and thriving vermicomposting system.

The Worm Starter Mix is a worm-rich material taken from thriving worm beds and added directly to a good size, breathable container. It is cheaper for you because I don't have to spend more time separating and counting or weighing the worms. That time I save I offer it to you as a lifetime support and coaching.

The Worm Starter Mix by thelittlewormfarm.com



A worm farm is an ecosystem and the worms need the presence of other microorganisms in order to be healthy.
Left: a fungal hypha
Below: microscope and springtail



ADVANTAGES OF THE WORM STARTER MIX

Cost effective – The small (2L) Worm Starter Mix costs only \$15 and is great if you want to start a worm farm on a budget. While the regular one (5L), which costs \$35, is great for starting a worm bin such as the Can-O-Worms, Worm Factory or Worm Cafe.

Refer to the Q&A section for their sizes Included in the price is lifetime support, and a range of educational resources to help you get the most out of your vermicomposting efforts.

“Ready For Action” – You're not going to receive a gob of stressed-out (some dead) worms, more interested in escaping than processing food scraps. You receive a healthy all-in-one mix that's primed and ready for a population explosion (assuming you adhere to the basic principles of

vermicomposting). Because I want everyone to succeed in their worm farming adventure, I'm offering a free downloadable worm farming guide, even if you are not buying from me: [Free Worm Farming Guide](#).

Microbe-Loaded – Often, one of the major problems with a brand new vermicomposting system is that it's basically a sterile environment. Since the Worm Starter Mix comes with loads of beneficial-microbe-rich worm bed habitat material, the worms are going to feel right at home, and the decomposition process in the system will get the kick-start it needs!

But don't worry, most organisms found in a worm farm are harmless. They are part of the composting team that together with the worms help you get a high quality vermicompost your plants will be thanking you for. Amongst them: springtails, potworms, roly pollies and mites.

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Harvest Vermicompost Sooner – This may seem counter-intuitive, given the fact that there is a small worm biomass in comparison to “kilos of worms”, but you'll likely get to the point of harvesting your first batch of vermicompost more quickly!

This only applies to the medium and large Worm Starter Mixes. They contain a lot of rich habitat material that is already quite close to being good quality vermicompost when it gets added. So not only do you help accelerate the conversion of food waste into new vermicompost, but the material itself reaches the point of being harvest-ready very quickly.

Simple but effective – My aim is to offer customers a truly simple but effective way to start up a worm bin. 5 easy steps:

1. Simply fill half your tray with moistened bedding material. You can skip this step with the medium and large mixes.
2. Spread your Worm Starter Mix on top.
3. Sprinkle some worm farm conditioner on the surface.
4. Add two handfuls of roughly chopped up food wastes.



5. Cover with more bedding material. You never can get enough of bedding material...

That's it, you can now close the bin and come back in a week for another feeding if the last one has almost gone.

Refer to my free guide on "[Worm Bin - Setup and Maintenance](#)" for more details and description of a safe feeding method.

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WORM BIN ORGANISMS

Aside from plenty of compost worms and plenty of microbes, the Worm Starter Mix also contains lots of other compost ecosystem organisms. This can be a source of concern for some people (understandable, especially if you are fairly new to vermicomposting). Rest assured, most of the creatures you will encounter in your bin are harmless (for your worms that is – NONE of them are harmful for humans! lol).

A FEW CAVEATS BEFORE SIGNING OFF

I'm definitely a "worm mix" proponent - in case you hadn't guessed (lol) - but I'll be the first to admit that the Worm Starter Mix isn't necessarily the "perfect" product for every customer and every situation. In general, it's also important to point out that I'm NOT trying to convince you that ordering worms by the pound/count is "BAD". I'm simply offering an effective alternative.

The Worm Starter Mix is well suited for those who are setting up brand new home-scale worm composting systems – especially those who don't mind being a little more patient and laid back.

The Worm Starter Mix might NOT be ideal if:

- You are a worm farming pro setting up a large-scale professional system and need results "yesterday" (but could work great if you don't mind taking your time).
- You are obsessed with receiving some exact, specific number of worms (if for example, you just won't be able to sleep at night unless you know you have precisely 1000 worms in your system! Lol).
- You are trying to boost the worm population in existing systems (in this case, you may be better off focusing on the factors that are slowing down your population growth, rather than simply adding more worms)
- You are after good "bait-sized" fishing worms (although, if you are happy with Red Wigglers for fishing in general, there are definitely ways to boost their size – just realise that you won't likely receive a lot of bait-sized worms with your mix).

On a somewhat related note – if you happen to be interested in worms as live food organisms (for fish, birds, amphibians etc), the Worm Starter Mix could be an excellent choice (as long as you don't need huge worms) – and you may even end up with a variety of other critters you can also use as live food (eg. springtails, isopods, white worms).

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Questions & Answers

How many worms are in the Worm Starter Mix?

The worms in the mix are not counted. I simply split a healthy worm bin and transfer all the content to the mix container. That content includes: worms, juvenile worms, worm cocoons, worm castings, some old bedding material and probably some food particles. The worms not being extracted from that content, they are less stressed out.

Because the mix contains existing materials, it will inoculate your new worm bin with beneficial microorganisms and help the worms settling faster. The juvenile worms will grow fast and cocoons will soon hatch (in average 3-5 baby worms per cocoon).

How large is the Worm Starter Mix?

The mix comes in three sizes:

- Small: 2L (\$15), great for setting up a new worm bin on a budget.
- Regular: 5L (\$35), most popular size, ideal for starting off on the right foot.
- Medium: 10L (\$50), for those who want to speed up things a bit, no need for initial bedding material, harvest sooner.
- Large: 20L (\$75, pickup only), for starting multiple or larger bins or when you need to harvest more initial vermicompost sooner

Will it be enough?

It is literally possible to start a new worm bin with just couple of worms. Obviously it will require some patience but even two sexually mature worms can repopulate a standard worm bin between 7 and 9 months if conditions are right.

If you feel your Worm Starter Mix is insufficient or would like some more worms to speed up things a little bit, I'm offering your second mix (size of your choice) at half its original price.

I'm totally new and a little worried even if all sounds so simple.

Would you feel better if I'm telling you that as my customer you will not leave with just a bag of worms? You are now stuck with me for life (hahaha) and I will do my best to guide you

The Worm Starter Mix by thelittlewormfarm.com

throughout your vermicomposting adventure. If you can pop around my place you can even bring your worm bin and we will set it up together and I will show you some tips and tricks on how to feed and care for your new babies.

Will I get support and help?

When you buy a chicken or a rabbit, do you receive help and support from the seller on how to raise them properly? In most case I bet the answer is no. When you buy worms from the hardware store, will the store customer support department help you with troubleshooting your bin? Chances are the support person doesn't know a thing about vermicomposting.

When you buy worms from The Little Worm Farm, I will offer you full support and help you on your way to success. I will follow up on your progress and will always answer your emails as soon as possible.

Will a worm mix perform well and allow me to compost all my food waste?

Yes and no. A worm mix (either from The Little Worm Farm or somewhere else) will provide great performance in terms of starting up a new worm bin. In the long run the performance will depend on the environmental conditions and the skills of the worm farmer in charge of the bin. However, even with a proper feeding procedure, a single regular domestic size worm bin, will never be able to compost all the food waste generated by a family, this is because worms control their population size depending on the surface area available.

Can I use a Worm Starter Mix to add worms to my garden?

Yes. There is a popular belief that compost worms cannot survive in a garden, this is not accurate. If your garden has bare soil exposed to full sun then it is true that compost worms won't live around. However shaded area with a lot of cover plants or with a thick layer of mulch, wood chips or dry leaves make a very good environment for them. These soil cover help retain moisture and reduce heat and will attract local compost worms as well as deep soil dwellers.

So if you have a garden, garden bed or even pots, you can add a layer of worm mix on the surface, cover a large area with a lot of mulch and water regularly to keep the soil moist. You can even build a simple worm feeding station with a simple bucket. Drill several 5 - 8 mm holes on the bottom, add food scraps on a weekly basis (or when all gone) and cover it back with the lid. Then place the bucket in the middle of the garden bed. The worms will come in for a feed and out pooping in the soil. Check the following pages for some photos:

<https://thelittlewormfarm.com/en/diy-and-experiments/article/big-rotter>

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What's next?

Reach out for help

If you are convinced that a worm mix is what you are after, try to find a local worm farmer who is selling worm mixes. If you are unsure, then contact me and I will be happy to help you out and ship some your way. I will also happily answer any related to worm farming in general, don't hesitate to get in touch: <https://thelittlewormfarm.com/contact>

Learn

I have also written a guide on "Worm Bin - Setup and Maintenance" available at no charge:

<https://thelittlewormfarm.com/worm-bin-setup-and-maintenance>

I run a newsletter where I will discuss various aspects of worm farming and other composting methods: <https://thelittlewormfarm.com/newsletter>

More reading

While waiting for your Worm Starter Mix to arrive you can get entertained and even learn one thing or two with my free online magazine: Worm'ag.

<https://thelittlewormfarm.com/wormag>

Community

As with all hobbies, joining a community is a great way to learn or at least share the fun with others. It can be less frustrating to know that others have had the same issues as us and much more fun to share successes with people who share the same passion. Here are two Facebook group I recommend:

[Red Worm Composting](#)

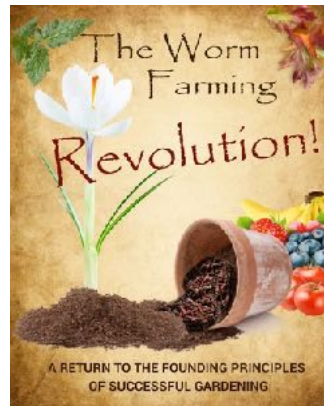
[Vermicomposting - Worm Farming](#)

Business

If your purpose of buying worms was to start a business selling them or their castings then I suggest you learn more about the [Worm Farming Alliance](#).

Other Resources

Whether you are a beginner or an experimented worm farmer, the resources listed here can help you get the most of your worm farming systems.



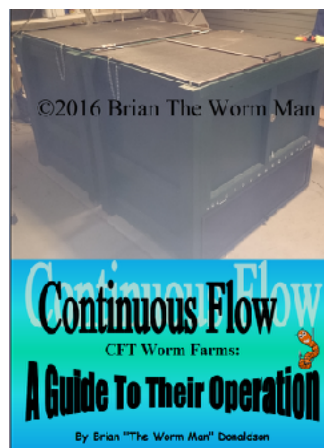
The Worm Farming Revolution

270+ pages paperback book and eBook by Pauly Piccirillo is useful for worm farmers at all levels. [Learn more about this book](#)



10 Biggest mistakes new wormfarmer makes

Learn from other's mistakes. Larry J. Shier has compiled a list of very common mistakes and their solutions. [Get it now...](#)



Continuous Flow - CFT Worm Farm Guide

Brian Donaldson introduces us to the use of Continuous Flow Through (CFT) worm bins. [Get it now...](#)