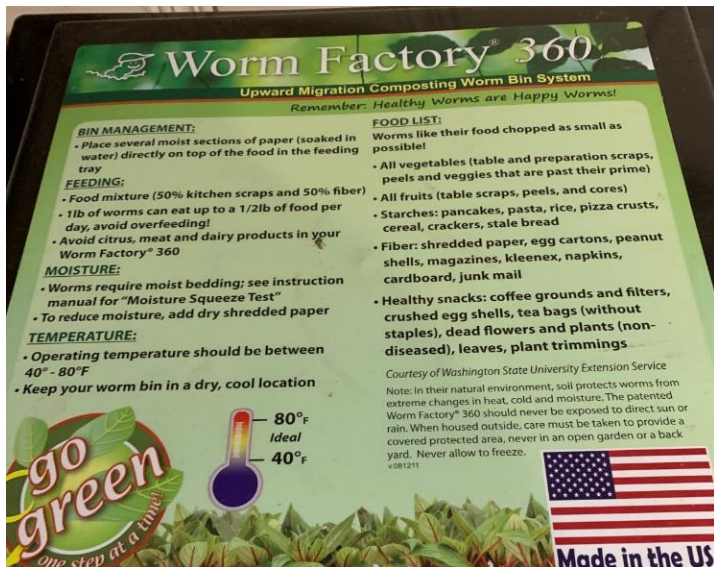


Wiggle and Squirm My Little Worms by Joy Walker



We've heard worms are good for soil. But what, exactly, do worms do? They make holes and aerate the soil but they also actually make the soil.

Imagine a tube – in one end you put all those chopped up bits from the soups, salads and other vegetable dishes and out the other end comes an oozy, brown, nutrient rich material that can be added to your garden – an organic fertilizer.

Several years ago, I bought a composting worm bin system. The worms that were recommended are called red wigglers. They are not the same as the standard earthworm you typically see in garden soil. These worms feed on vegetable matter and paper.

Now I'm not saying I have top secret documents but if I did anyone looking for information would be out of luck. After the cross-cutting shredder the pieces go into the bin and the worms eat them.

As a bonus – add water and the liquid travels through the bin and exits as worm compost tea – a liquid nitrogen-rich organic fertilizer.

I'll bet you are wondering a few things:

1. Does it smell bad? *Only when I put too much broccoli in the bin.*

2. Does it attract bugs? *It does produce fruit flies but I have an ultraviolet bug trap and they don't get far. And if I don't put too much fruit in all at once the fruit flies are minimal. The lid stays on and keeps them trapped.*

3. Is it hard to manage? *It is very little work at all – in fact if I worked a little harder, I could eliminate bad smells and bugs. Chopping food scraps into small pieces solves smells and bugs.*

4. Where do I keep it? *In the basement.*

My system has four tiers. The paper and food scraps go only into the top tier. The worms live below the top tier. Periodically, I remove the bottom tier and empty it into the garden. I rinse it out and it becomes the new top tier. As you travel through the bin from top to bottom, the layers become less like paper and more like soil.



Since I have set up this system, I throw a lot less food into the garbage and that means less food for those alley rats.

You cannot recycle oils, meat, or fats. These items could grow bacteria. These worms are vegan!

And you cannot add citrus as this would kill the worms. These fruits are too acidic.

Here you can see the entire system. The spout drains excess liquid and this goes into jars and is used for fertilizer.



This is an honest photo – I could have wiped down the bins so they looked nicer but this is how it typically looks.

What do I like about this system?

I like that I never need to buy fertilizers for my garden. I like that my garbage isn't full of food scraps. I like that it is a stable system that continues to provide worm tea fertilizer all winter so when Spring comes around, I can condition my soil before I ever plant anything.

I like that no one will get sensitive information from any documents of mine 😊

What don't I like?

The bits of paper escape when I pour them into the bin and make a mess sometimes.

Worm composting isn't for everyone. You have to enjoy watching worms wiggle. I do!