



Vermicomposting in the GT2

“Vermicomposting” is a form of composting using worms. Specifically, a type of worm called “red wigglers”. They like to live in their food and can eat the equivalent of their own body weight every day, making them very efficient at turning scraps into fertilizer. This is a key part of successful growing in the Garden Tower, providing the nutrient density for plants to thrive.

How to vermicompost:

Unlike traditional composting, the GT2 compost column does not require any turning or mixing. The worms do the work, you just need to provide them with the right conditions. Worms need a source of food, prefer temperatures between 16 and 27 degrees Celsius, and an environment that is damp but not soggy. The most common issues experienced by those new to vermicomposting are overfeeding and not adding enough browns, both of which can result in too much moisture.

During the set up your tower, place a layer of soil about two inches thick in the bottom of the center tube. Add a handful or two of “greens” (worm food), release your worms into their new home, and top with “browns” (worm bedding). Always use at least 2-3 times the amount of bedding as food. This will ensure that there isn’t too much moisture, and provide a “cap” which helps to prevent pests such as fruit flies from being attracted.

As the worms process your scraps into “worm castings” (rich, black, nutrient-dense soil), you will continue to add layers of food topped with bedding and the worms will slowly move up in the column as the castings build up below them. As the old bedding breaks down, it will also be processed by the worms to become part of the castings. How much and how often to feed your worms depends on the number of worms, and also on how easily the scraps you are adding can be broken down. It is generally recommended to feed your worms once or twice a week.

You will know that the worms are doing their job because the level of material in the tube will go down between feedings and there will be no noticeable smell. You can also use a long stick such as a gardening stake to move aside the top layer of browns and check to see how much food remains.

When the tube begins to get full, you will want to empty the finished compost by removing the screen at the bottom of the tube and allowing the castings to fall into the drawer. Sometimes there may be plant roots growing into the tube, or the castings may be compacted. If the castings don't immediately drop into the drawer you can use a garden stake or other long stick pushed in from the top of the tube to loosen things up. A tool called the Compost Crank Twist can make this task very easy. Separate out the worms and put them back into the tube to continue their work, and use the castings to fertilize the tower or any other plants you have growing.

What to put in the tube:

The "greens", or worm food, is mainly fruit and vegetable scraps from the kitchen as well as yard and garden trimmings. Chop your scraps into small pieces about one inch square or smaller before adding them to the tube. The smaller the pieces the faster the worms will be able to break it down.

It is possible to customize the type of nutrients available to your plants as well as the soil pH by changing what you choose to compost.

Worms also need a little bit of "grit" to help them break down food. Crushed egg shells are excellent for this. Alternatively a small amount of diatomaceous earth (D.E.) can also serve this purpose.

Do not add: citrus, onions, garlic, oils, meat, or dairy as the worms will not process these. Also, keep in mind that if you add plant material containing seeds, you may end up with volunteer plants.

The "browns", or worm bedding should be absorbent, light weight, and not compacted to allow for air flow. The most common and most effective bedding is shredded paper and cardboard. It can also include some small amounts of shredded brown leaves. As a general rule, you can't have too many browns.

As with anything, there is a learning curve to vermicomposting and growing in the tower. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the Earth Connections team. We are always happy to help!