

Worms Anyone?

A recent article in the Toronto Star (Feb 4, 2009- GT3) featured three U of T students, Mississauga Campus, Environmental Affairs Office and their experience with vermicomposting – composting with worms. A group of students at U of T constructs and distributes worm composters to more than 40 offices across campus. Apparently, demand continues to grow.

The composters are plastic buckets that contain bedding made from soaked and wrung out shredded newspaper which becomes home to a colony of red wiggler worms. The buckets are small enough to sit beside a desk and are odourless. Throw your food waste (orange peels, banana skins, apple cores, tea bags, coffee grounds) into the bucket to feed your worms and reduce the amount of wet garbage you produce. The worms convert the food waste to rich soil. The worms consume their body weight daily. So if you create 2 lbs of food waste daily, you will need 2 lbs of worms. Meat, dairy product and grease are not recommended fodder for your wigglers.

To maintain the composter, add more bedding and adjust soil moisture as needed. Alternatively, when the volume of the bedding has decreased and become darker with observable castings, roughly every three to six months, the bedding can be changed. Simply move everything to one half of the bin and replenish with new bedding. Bury fresh food waste one inch into the new bedding and wait for the worms to wiggle back to the freshly bedded half of the bin. Then replace the bedding on the other side of the bin. The harvested bedding can be added to plant pots or to garden beds.

Green Tip: Worms can be purchased on-line! The UT Mississauga Environmental Office purchases their worms from Cathy's Crawlers at <http://www.cathyscomposters.com>. The bins can be purchased on-line or homemade. Instructions for making your own bin can be found at <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Your-Own-Worm-Compost-System>. For more information, contact green.team@utoronto.ca.