

## Worm Bin Troubleshooting Guide

If a problem does occur and you think you've found a solution, don't stop there. Continue to give your bin daily checkups until you see—or, in many cases, smell—an improvement. You may encounter some of the common problems listed below.



Symptom	Diagnosis	Remedy
Strong, Bad Smell	Not enough air circulation.	Fluff bedding. Make sure bedding or compost is not blocking the airholes.
	Too much food in bin.	Feed worms less food and/or less often.
	Improper food added.	Remove meat, dairy, and oily products.
	Anaerobic conditions.	Add bedding to absorb moisture.
Fruit Flies	Food exposed.	Bury food completely.
	Too much food.	Don't overfeed worms.
Ant Infestation		Place bin outside in colder weather (temperature must not be below 50°F).
		Immerse bin feet in liquid.
		A barrier of chalk or petroleum jelly may repel the ants.
		Place ant traps near, not in, your bin.
		If bedding seems dry, add water.
Mite Infestation	Mite population is high.	Avoid adding foods with high moisture content, such as fruits and vegetables.
Overly Moist	Too much water added to bedding	Stop adding water.
		Add paper to soak up extra moisture.
	Too much food with high moisture content.	Put in less fruit and vegetable waste.

### Feeding

Worms are not picky when it comes to food, as they eat many of the same items you do. They especially enjoy vegetable and fruit peelings, coffee grounds and filters, newspaper, and veggie scraps.

Although worms eat fruit, be sure not to overload your bin with a high citrus diet. For example, if you are making a large amount of freshly squeezed orange juice, all of the remaining orange peels can introduce a toxic amount of d-limonene, a chemical that occurs naturally in citrus and other plants, into your bin. D-limonene is released as the peels are torn and broken down. So, you wouldn't want to pulverize the peels before adding them to your bin, as this would create a high d-limonene concentration. Due to the slow decomposition rate of citrus peels, however, it is okay to add small to moderate amounts to an established bin. If you add citrus peels to your bin and it begins to smell like a moldy fruit stand, then you may want to save it for a future feeding.

Worms do not have teeth! They have a gizzard, similar to birds, that helps them grind small bits of food. Adding ground-up eggshells, oyster shell "flour," or a handful of gritty soil to your bin will help your worms with this process. Other organisms you will find in your bin, like springtails and mold, assist worms by breaking down the food waste first. Some foods take longer to break down because they are more fibrous, such as broccoli stocks, carrots, and potato peels. Some people like to puree their food waste first, thus allowing the worms to eat more quickly and process even more food. Worms in a standard bin can eat about a pound of food a day.