

Troubleshooting Guide: Vermicomposting

Use this guide to help you on your composting journey to success! Still have questions? Email us at lbrecycles@longbeach.gov or connect with us @LBRecycles on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Below are tips to help you address common concerns about vermicomposting.

? My vermicompost bin smells bad.

Cause		Solution
<i>Overfeeding</i>	→	Feed less and remove uneaten food. Tip: Feeding in quadrants will help you see how much the worms are eating. Remember, when starting your worm bin, feed them slowly so they can adjust to their new diet. Once your worms have adjusted to their new diet, worms can eat half their weight in food each day.
<i>Uncovered food scraps</i>	→	Bury all food scraps under bedding or cover with a layer of newspaper.
<i>Too much moisture</i>	→	Add dry bedding such as shredded strips of paper to absorb extra moisture. If wet clumps are present, break them up before adding dry bedding.

? My worms are crawling up the sides of the bin or are up on the lid.

There is something about your vermicompost bin that your worms do not like.

Cause		Solution
<i>The worms could dislike a specific food item that was added to the bin</i>	→	Remove any unwanted foods that may be harmful to your worms, and remove any uneaten food that the worms may dislike.
<i>Not enough food</i>	→	Provide food. Remember, it is best to feed in quadrants to monitor what your worms are eating and how quickly they are eating it.
<i>Bin is too warm or too cold</i>	→	If placed outside, move indoors. The ideal temperature is 70°F. Your vermicompost bin should not get colder than 50° F or warmer than 85° F.

Vermicompost Troubleshooting continued

? My vermicompost bin is too wet.

Cause		Solution
<i>Overfeeding</i>	→	Add dry bedding such as shredded strips of paper to absorb extra moisture and/or remove uneaten food.
<i>Clumps of material could be preventing air flow</i>	→	If clumps are present, break them up. Break up dry clumps and spray with water. Break up wet clumps and place strips of dry bedding on top.

? My vermicompost bin is attracting fruit flies.

Cause		Solution
<i>Overfeeding</i>	→	Feed less and/or remove uneaten food scraps.
<i>Uncovered food scraps</i>	→	Fruit flies are not harmful to your vermicompost, but some people may consider them pests. To help prevent fruit flies, bury all food scraps beneath the bedding or cover with a layer of newspaper and make sure the lid is on securely.
<i>Fruit scraps could have fruit fly larvae</i>	→	Freeze fruit scraps prior to adding to the bin to kill fruit fly larvae.

? Ants are getting into my vermicompost bin.

Create a barrier around the bin with diatomaceous earth chalk.

Common Misconceptions:

There is mold or fungus growing in my compost pile or my vermicompost bin.

Most mold that forms on vegetables is OK, but mold that forms on fruit could be harmful to your worms. To prevent mold in your worm bin, prevent overfeeding and add dry bedding like shredded paper or sheets of newspaper on top to maintain a balanced level of moisture. Remove any mold and moldy food from the bin.

My compost pile is attracting insects.

Most insects found in your vermicompost bin are beneficial to your compost and are part of the natural ecosystem! This includes pot worms, springtails, mites, fruit flies, and fungus gnats.

Have questions or need more information? Visit longbeach.gov/lbrecycles or call 562-570-2869



@LBRecycles

To request this information in an alternative format or to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Department of Public Works at lbrecycles@longbeach.gov or 562-570-2850. A minimum of three (3) business days is requested to ensure availability. Reasonable attempts will be made to accommodate requests made within less than three (3) business days.

