

# Let worms eat your garbage!

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Hey kids! This column is for you. The end of summer doesn't have to mean the end of fun gardening activities; you can look in the *ExtensionLine* all winter to find fun, indoor activities. Our first project will be to see how worms eat your garbage and turn it into rich soil.

**Here are the supplies you'll need:**

- **a pint size deli or margarine container and its lid**
- **a handful of potting soil (the grown-ups in your house probably have some).**
- **a page of newspaper**
- **some kitchen garbage like vegetable peelings, crushed egg shells and coffee grounds**
- **a push pin**
- **and a few worms from a bait shop**

First take the container and the lid and make sure they are very clean. Then use the pushpin to poke lots and lots of holes in the sides of the container and the lid. (Worms need air to live and do their work.) Tear enough strips of newspaper to make a loose handful and put them in your container. Add a handful of soil and a handful of veggie scraps. Sprinkle a little water on top and mix it all up with your fingers. Now you can put in your worms. Little Red Wigglers from the bait shop work well, but worms you find in your yard won't survive indoors. Stir in the worms with your fingers and put on the lid. Set the whole thing aside, away from bright light.

Now the worms will start their work! Because they don't like light, they'll work their way into the middle of your garbage and start eating and digesting the newspaper and scraps of food. The worm castings (that's worm poop!) are part of what soil is made of. Open your container every few days to stir it up and sprinkle it with water if it's drying out. While you're stirring it, check how everything looks: are the worms getting bigger? Are the scraps getting smaller? Does the newspaper look any different? It should take a few weeks for everything in the container to turn into soil. If you want, you can put your worms and new soil into a larger container and add more scraps of newspaper. To make your project different, use grass clippings and fallen leaves instead of kitchen scraps.

Some people save all their vegetable scraps and feed worms in bins all winter long. When spring comes they have rich soil to put into their gardens and lots of worms, too! If you'd like to learn more about worms, read *Worms Eat My Garbage* by Mary Appelhof or check out [www.nj.com/yucky/worm](http://www.nj.com/yucky/worm) on the Internet.