



VermiBag
Composting Systems

Setting up your new VermiBag

*Working towards a sustainable
Future...One VermiBag at a Time*



*Quality from the
inside out*

Recycling our World

Congratulations on the purchase of your new

VERMIBAG

Initial Setup

Pride in Workmanship



Once you have installed your VermiBag in the stand, place 2 or 3 single sheets of wetted newspaper or paper towels in the bottom of the bag to cover the opening into the lower harvest panel section. This will provide support for the initial bedding and keep it off of the harvest panel until the first harvest. **DO NOT** place multiple layers of thick newspaper in the bottom of the bag....It will restrict the airflow through the system and cause anaerobic conditions to start in the bag. This layer of paper is only used for the bag's initial setup and will be removed during the first harvest.

Start the system out by placing 5" to 6" of damp bedding on top of the wetted newspaper you placed at the bottom of the bag. If you have some existing compost from another system, you can use a small amount of this right at the very bottom, but don't put too much, as it acts like a sponge and tends to get muddy if it is well-worked compost. It is better to use fresh bedding.

We highly recommend making some moist bedding to use in your new system. This bedding is made from a combination of shredded white paper, shredded newspaper, and shredded cardboard mixed with either coconut coir or peat moss. We also normally add coffee grounds into this for some added nutrition.

For the best results, run the white paper and newspaper thru a shredder if you have one. The cardboard also decomposes much faster if you're able to shred it. If not, then rip it into as small of pieces as possible. When you make the bedding, add 4 or 5 cups of soil or castings to the mix. This will provide the bacteria and microbes that are needed to kick start the system. This soil will also provide the grit that is required for the gizzards of the worms.

YouTube Video on
["Making Moist Worm Bedding"](#)



Adding Worms

Place 1-5 lbs. of worms into your VermiBag depending on the model of bag you have. If you live in a hot, dry area, we recommend placing a non-breathable material (plastic bag, bubble wrap..ect) over the material to help retain moisture in the system. This is especially important when first starting up the system as the bag's volume is very low, and the material can quickly dry out if it is not monitored. Once the bag's volume increases, you will no longer need to do this as the mass of material will retain the moisture on its own as long as moist feedings are continuously given. If you live in a wetter area, a couple of sheets of newspaper will work very well.



Feeding Your VermiBag

Once your worms have had time to settle in, it's time to add a small number of food scraps to the system. We recommend freezing your food scraps before adding them to the system. Although this is not absolutely necessary, it has many benefits, including:

- Killing any eggs or larva that may be on the outside skins of vegetables and fruits.
- Accelerating the decomposition process by breaking down the cell walls of scraps.
- Providing a constant supply of waste for your system. We don't always produce the same amount of organic waste each week. One week we may have a bunch and the next week hardly any. By freezing them you can add a constant amount each week no matter how much waste scrapes you produced that week.
- Less likely to get fruit fly and gnats in your system. Since frozen scrapes decompose much quicker, it is less likely to provide a hosting area for fruit flies or gnats to lay eggs since the material is normally consumed in a matter of days

DO NOT feed the bag again until **MOST** of the food from the previous feeding is almost gone. Ideally you want almost all of the food scraps to be gone after 1 week. If the scraps are lasting more than one week, there is a risk the system may start to smell. If all the food scraps are gone...then you can add more on the next feeding. Continue doing this until you find the point where the worms will consume most of the food between the feedings.



Monitoring your VermiBag

VermiBags are much different from other systems on the market in that they can handle a lot of moisture. You don't normally need to drain off excess moisture from frozen scraps like you would have to do with other systems. VermiBags can handle this excess moisture very well. That is not to say you can't add too much moisture...because you can...but they can handle a lot more than other systems. As a general rule, it is better to operate VermiBags on the side of too wet...vs. Too dry. This is exactly the opposite of most systems. If a VermiBag becomes too wet (leachate dripping out the bottom), it can quickly recover from this situation by cutting back on the moisture input to the bag and the addition of more dry bedding.

It is important to note that the bottom Harvest Panel Cover on VermiBags is NOT designed to hold moisture, it is highly water-resistant, but it will allow excess moisture to drip out of the system. It was designed that way. This prevents anaerobic conditions from starting at the bottom of the bag. 30-40 small holes are punched into the panel. If these become clogged up due to running the bag wet, you may need to punch new holes into the panel with a leather awl or something similar.

Too Wet

We recommend placing some type of container under the VermiBag, just in case excess moisture drips out of the bag. This also acts as a quick monitor to see if you are running the system too wet. If you see leachate dripping from the bottom of the bag, it means you are adding too much moisture into the system. To remedy this, you can either cut back on wet feedings or add a little dry bedding to the system to absorb the additional moisture, then cut back on the number of wet food scraps you are adding to the system for a week or two. Remember, you want the system to be about the same moisture like a damp sponge. It is important to note that even though your worms may thrive if you run your system very wet...when you try to harvest the castings, they will be extremely wet and very difficult if not impossible to screen.

Too Dry

VermiBags provide excellent airflow, which allows the system to support huge worm populations. This additional airflow is very beneficial to the worms, but if the feedings do not contain enough moisture to compensate for the evaporation that is occurring by this airflow, then additional moisture will need to be added via a sprayer. Placing a vapor barrier such as bubble wrap or plastic sheet on top of the material will reduce the amount of evaporation in the system. This is especially important when starting up the system with only a small volume in the bag.

There are two quick and easy methods of getting a good idea of the moisture in the system.

- The first is to feel the bottom of the bag, around the harvest panel. You don't have to unzip it; just simply push on the outside of the harvest panel to see if it feels flexible. If it does, then it is at the proper moisture, but if it feels hard and crinkly, then the bag's bottom is drying out. You need to add additional moisture to the system (possibly several quarts over a couple of days) until this area is damp again. You start to get an occasional drop of leachate out...once this happens, then return to the normal feeding again. If it feels soggy and wet, then you will need to cut back on wet feedings and add additional shredded paper or peat/coir to the system to absorb the excess moisture.

■ The other area to monitor is the inside of the bag, along the outside edge. Even though the material on the sides of the bags breathes just slightly....it does breathe, and the bag's sides will be the first area to start drying out. It is a good idea to check these areas every couple of weeks by simply reaching down along the inside of the bag to a depth of 6-8" and see what the moisture is like. ****Remember it should feel moist**** It is also a good idea to add some of the feedings directly along the edges of the bag....not just in the middle.

****The key to maintaining a good moisture level in a VermiBag is continuous feedings. The feedings are what give the VermiBag the moisture it needs to operate at the perfect level. If you are only feeding small amounts of food scraps, the system may start to dry out unless you add additional water with your feedings, but if you are adding large moist feedings of scraps on a continuous basis, the system should maintain a good moisture level on its own.**



Harvesting

VermiBags are continuous flow systems, meaning that you feed on the top and harvest from the bottom. Composting worms will normally concentrate in the top 4"-8" of material. There are normally very few deeper than that. (Unless you are running your system wet) You should be able to do your first harvest in about 4-6 months. At this time, your VermiBag should be at least ½ full.

There are two criteria for a successful harvest

Time The system needs to be in operation long enough to produce finished casting. This is normally around 4-6 months before you do the first harvest. This will give the worms time to process the initial material properly. Successive harvests can occur about every 4 weeks.

Depth The system should be at least 14"-16" deep when you do the first harvest. If it is less than that, you will still have worms hanging out at the bottom. If the system depth is less than 14", care must be taken when harvesting to ensure the "Bridge" doesn't collapse when removing the castings.

*****Note:** The first harvest of the system may be less than optimal as there may still be un-composted material at the bottom of the system, and there may still be some holdout worms in this area. By the second and third harvest, there will normally be very few worms in the harvesting castings.

To harvest, simply unzip the Harvest Access Panel completely and invert the panel cover and push it back to avoid getting castings on the zipper. Then reach inside the liner and pull out the desired amount of castings. Don't take too much out of the system, or you will risk having the entire contents collapse down into the harvest area. It's not that big of a deal since the harvest area tapers and will prevent too much material from falling out, but it can make a mess. The recommended depth to go when harvesting the castings is to about 1" above the harvest panel's zipper. This will yield about 5 Gallons (40 lbs) on a Max and about 3 Gallons (25 lbs) on the mini. The Avg harvest on the Mammoth is around 100lbs.

After the first harvest, you should be able to harvest every 4-5 weeks.



Resetting the System

Once you have finished collecting castings, you will have a void space at the bottom of the bag. To get the bag's contents to fill this area and drop-down, simply push on the sides of the bag in a couple of directions around the bag, and the entire contents of the bag will settle into the void.



Using the VermiWindow

If your VermiBag is equipped with a Vermi-Window, the bedding level will most likely be below the window when you first set it up. If you would like to use the window when you first set up the system..... simply slope the bedding level in the bag for it covers a portion of the window. It may be almost a 45-degree angle...but that's fine, the worms don't care if the material is level or not...they'll climb that slope for the food you've placed in front of the window. Each morning the bedding will drop down some as the worms work the material over, so it will be necessary to pull additional material up to keep the window area covered until you have enough material in the system to cover the window all the time. Some of the best foods to place in the window are Avocados, Melon rinds, or any type of Squash. Just concentrate the feeding right above and against the window.

****For best results, it is best to place the food right up against the window, along the upper ½ of the window, or even slightly above the window. The worms are very good window cleaners and will make it sparkling clean in a day or two.**

Doing Your Part to save our Planet



Maintaining the Harvest Panel Zipper

In order to ensure smooth operation and longevity of the lower zipper we recommend occasionally adding a small amount of Vaseline Petroleum Jelly to the zipper and the zipper pull. This will provide a lubricant to help the zipper open and close smoothly and also prevent any corrosion on the zipper pull from starting....if you run your system wet.

Making a Stand for your VermiBag

Instructions for making either a Wood or PVC Stand for your new VermiBag are available on our website. On the top menu, select **Instructions**.

www.vermibag.com

If you have questions.....there are many valuable resources on the web to help set up and run a successful worm bin....but take some of them with a grain of salt, as they are not always 100% correct. Several good Facebook groups deal with worm composting.....search "red worm composting" or "vermi-composting."



www.VermiBag.com