

Putting worms to work: how communities can harness the power of worms to keep Scotland beautiful *by Lydia Potter, Earth & Worms*

Earth & Worms is a community garden space located in Tillydrone, Aberdeen. We provide a space for the community to get involved in growing local food and tending to Tillydrone's green spaces, whilst combating social issues concerning isolation, loneliness, and the adverse mental health we see affecting our immediate and surrounding community. Our garden encourages members of the community to collect their food waste and donate it to be put to use in our traditional and vermicompost set-ups. Earth & Worms have repurposed an unused bathtub into a thriving vermicompost set-up with red tiger worms (also known as red wigglers, *Eiseneia fetida*) that were graciously donated by Aberdeenshire local worm breeder, [Newburgh Worms](#).



Like traditional composting, vermicomposting turns organic waste into a nutrient rich fertiliser that is highly beneficial to any community garden or home gardener. The process is simple: red wiggler worms consume organic waste – such as fruit and vegetable scraps – and excrete worm castings, which are the refined compost (known as 'black gold'). The castings are rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and their fine structure help to improve the soil, adding aeration and ensuring sufficient drainage. The process of vermicomposting can be significantly faster than traditional compost, takes up less space and can be done outdoors or indoors. The end products can be used in a myriad of ways and are a cheap and efficient replacement for man-made fertilisers.

Whilst setting up a vermicomposting bin – or wormery – requires more thought than traditional composting, it is far from challenging. The red wiggler worms require three basic components; a ventilated shelter, a suitable bedding material and food to munch on. The equipment doesn't need to be expensive or fancy, a shallow composting box (or bathtub) with holes for drainage and a lid

for ventilation will work just as well as a commercial vermicompost bin. Shredded brown cardboard and torn up newspapers can be diverted from waste for use as the bedding and the worms will thrive in the carbon-rich environment. Under the right conditions, the worms will convert organic matter - such as fruit and vegetable peelings, garden scraps, coffee grounds, tea leaves, egg shells and natural fibres - into valuable fertiliser within a few months. The resultant compost can be mixed into grow beds to provide a nutrient boost to both ornamental and edible plants. A liquid fertiliser (also known as 'compost tea' or 'liquid gold') can be prepared by steeping a few handfuls of compost in water for a day or two in the sun. Garden beds or houseplants can be watered with this concoction and it provides nutrients in a more plant-available form than traditional compost.

Vermicomposting is at the heart of Earth & Worm's community garden project. Repurposing food and textile waste directly benefits the productivity and growing potential of the garden and promotes community involvement. We encourage readers to consider setting up a wormery in their own gardens or local communities. In this way, we can help to enhance the natural beauty of towns and cities across Scotland.

Find out what Earth & Worms are doing to benefit the community at Tillydrone at our [Facebook page](#).

Useful links & further information:

www.rhs.org.uk/soil-composts-mulches/worm-composting