



# Project Instructions

## Compost @ Home: Part 3

### Harvesting Your Castings

You did it! Congratulations! You are now on part 3 of composting at home. This means you have successfully learned about vermicomposting and created a worm bin. You will now separate the castings and use them to fertilize your soil and help your plants burst to life!



### What Are Worm Castings?

After worms digest organic materials, they release waste from their bodies called castings. The simple answer is worm poop. It's not just ordinary poop, though; worm castings are the richest natural fertilizer known to humans. A spoonful of worm castings contains more microorganisms than there are people on the planet!

You will know the castings are ready to harvest when you see a smooth black area with no visible food or paper from the surface to the bottom. This will take roughly two to three months from the time you started your worm farm.

You can harvest your farm one of two ways: all at once or in sections. If you want to harvest all at once, stop feeding your worms and let the bin sit for a few weeks. Then proceed to the steps on the following page. If you want to harvest in sections, stop feeding in the area of the bin that you want to harvest. For example, continue to feed only in the right half of the bin, and leave the left side of the bin to rest for a few weeks. The majority of your worms will migrate to the active feeding side, making harvesting your castings a little bit easier. Then follow the harvesting instructions on just the left side of the bin.

After you've harvested part or all of your worm farm, go back to Composting @ Home: Part 2 to use as a reference to rebuild your worm farm.

One fun and easy way to harvest is called the Pyramid method (directions follow).



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# HARVEST YOUR CASTINGS

### MATERIALS

Newspaper or a tarp  
Container for castings

Container for worms  
Container for any trash bits  
- fruit stickers are common.



**Find** a flat, sunny place outside to lay out your tarp or newspaper and place the containers on the corners so it won't blow away.

**Place** 2 to 4 cup mounds of your castings on the tarp and form them into pyramid shapes.

**Let** the mounds sit in the sun for 20 minutes or so - the worms do not like the light and will wiggle down to the bottom of the pyramid.

**Lightly** brush the castings aside from the top and sides of your pyramids, placing the castings in the castings container, any trash bits in the trash container and any lingering worms in the worm container.

**Hopefully** you will see some worm cocoons. Each cocoon can hatch up to five baby worms. Place them in the worm container, but it is ok if some end up in your castings container.



**Continue** brushing the castings aside until you reach your ball of worms in the core.

**Return** the worms to your prepared bin.

**Wash your hands.**



### How to use your castings

The easiest way to use your castings is to sprinkle them on top of the soil right near your plants and then add a little water on top so all the nutrients can soak in.

You can also put castings in a bucket, dilute with water, and pour into the soil around your plants.

Experiment by adding castings to one plant but not the other. Observe the growth and note size, density, color, pests, and then, if an edible plant, taste.

