

Composting etc.

Every Australian, on average, produces about 180 kg of food and garden waste a year. If that is sent to rot in landfill, it produces 15.3 kg of methane gas (one of the most powerful gases driving climate change).

In the Spiritual Exercises (#23), St Ignatius invites us to appreciate that all of creation is a gift from God. Therefore, we can look at organic materials as a resource rather than as waste. We can also celebrate the role of bacteria and worms in turning organic materials into nutrients. Composting/worm farms/Bokashi bins are simple ways that we can work with other elements of creation for the good of our gardens and the planet.

Compost bins

You can buy or build household or large-scale composting bins such as: outdoor bins, with or without ventilation and ground holes; tumblers; or open enclosures.

You then place your organic waste in the compost bin and leave it there for worms, bacteria and fungi to break it down. Compost bins need a healthy mix of nitrogen (e.g. grass cuttings, kitchen scraps, citrus peelings, egg shells, tea bags, coffee grindings) and carbon (e.g. shredded newspapers, autumn leaves). To accelerate the composting process: air by turning it over with a fork and add a natural fertiliser or lime. [Sustainability Victoria's website](#) as a great composting troubleshooting guide.

The end product is a brown-black soil-like substance can be added to your garden soil, giving it more structure, moisture retention and nutrients.

Worm farms

Worms eat most organic matter, turning it into worm castings (looks and smells like soil except it feels soft and spongy). The nutrient rich worm castings can be added to garden soil.

You can make a worm farm for your household by using polystyrene boxes (instructions are on the internet) or buy one from your local council or hardware store. Worms eat vegetables, fruit, tea, coffee grindings etc but not citrus, onions, meat or twigs. You just put your organic materials in the top tray of your worm farm until it is full and then you put another tray on top and fill it. Most worm farms have three trays and by the time they are all full, the bottom tray will be ready for the garden. Store-bought worm farms will have a tap in the base from which you can take a liquid fertiliser. This can be mixed 10:1 with water for your indoor or garden plants. Large-scale worm farms do not have trays that need emptying.

Most hardware and garden stores sell worms suitable for worm farms. Your population of worms will self-regulate according to available food. This means you don't have to worry if some go to the garden when you empty the castings. [Sustainability Victoria's website](#) as a great worm farm troubleshooting guide.



Bokashi buckets

Bokashi buckets are perfect for small households. Being an air-tight bin you can keep your bin in the kitchen without pest or smell worries. Every time you add your kitchen scraps into the bucket you sprinkle some bokashi mix. This mix contains micro-organisms which ferment the food waste in the sealed bucket. Your bokashi bucket also produces a liquid fertiliser for watering your plants. A full bucket takes about four to six weeks before it is ready to be added to garden soil or a compost bin.

For more information:

- CHOICE: www.choice.com.au
- ABC TV Gardening Australia <http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/>
- Sustainability Victoria: <http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/You-and-Your-Home/Waste-and-recycling/Food-and-garden-waste/Compost>