

This Time-Lapse Video of Worms Making Compost Is Awesome

There's a lot of magic that happens beneath the ground. Now we get to see it up close.

By [Laura Sant](#) November 20, 2015

Vermicomposting is the process of using worms, usually red wigglers or red earthworms, to break down food waste and other [organic](#) material into a nutrient-packed soil supplement. It's a highly effective and efficient way to [compost](#) household food and garden scraps on a small scale. Using it in your garden results in more nutrients available to plants, better soil drainage, and improved soil structure. And, as we found out when we came across this [time-lapse video](#) by graduate students Gregor Skoberne and Anže Rovanišek in Slovenia, the process looks pretty cool, too.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GREGOR SKOBERNE

Rodale's Organic Life: Where was this shot?

Gregor Skoberne: The video was shot at the Department of Agronomy's Biotechnical Faculty in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Anže and I are friends and students there. I've made a few other time-lapse videos during my study—I'm currently doing my master's thesis in visualization of root growth—and Anže came to me with an idea that we could film worms mixing different layers of soil. He designed the experiment, and I was in charge of filming it.

ROL: How did you set it up and shoot it?

Anže Rovanišek: I built a kind of terrarium that I filled with alternating layers of compost and sawdust, making sure that the material was moist enough for the worms—about 150 of them. Immediately after adding the worms we started filming the process.

GS: It was shot with a Nikon D5100 with built-in interval timer shooter; photos were taken every 10 minutes for 20 days. I used the camera's flash because I couldn't use constant lighting (worms don't tolerate bright light), with the camera at an angle to avoid glare.

ROL: What exactly happens during vermicomposting?

GS: Vermicomposting is the controlled composting of organic residues with the use of earthworms and microorganisms. It is similar to composting, but it has specific benefits when compared with other means of processing organic wastes. By physically fragmenting and aerating the substrate and releasing enzymes, earthworms accelerate the process of decomposition and the development of beneficial microorganisms. This increased microorganism activity combined with the movement of the earthworms results in accelerated mineralization of nutrients and humification of organic matter.

ROL: Why is it so good for the soil?

GS: Vermicompost contains lots of nutrients in plant-available forms, humic substances, and plant growth-regulating hormones. The addition of vermicompost or vermicompost extracts is proven to have positive effects on plant growth and development. It also helps with plant pathogen suppressing abilities; that means plants grown with around 20 percent vermicompost added to the substrate grow better, stronger, and healthier.

ROL: When and how did you become interested in vermicomposting?

AR: I became interested in vermicomposting about 10 years ago, when I was reading forums about improving the condition of young seedlings and someone recommended vermicompost as an ultimate soil conditioner. Since there was no vermicompost on the market, I found a local seller of composting worms and started to produce my own castings. I was amazed at the benefits that vermicompost had on my new seedlings.

Related Article: [Compost Indoors This Winter—With Worms](#)

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