

Looking after a worm farm

- Worms need **moisture, fresh air, stable temperature & a food supply**
- Locate your bin in a sheltered area with no direct sun – minimise temperature variation
- Worm beds can be a commercial farm, concrete wash trough, an old bath, polystyrene fruit boxes, 2 or 3 stacked plastic tubs or buckets, or a simple compost heap
- Worm castings (vermicast) are water soluble – dilute 10 to 1 to put on plants. This liquid, as well as the worm 'wee', can be used as a foliar (leaf) spray or a soil drench. It is effective when sprayed onto black spot on roses. Vermicast is more than a fertiliser – it stimulates microbial activity.
- The species name of the most suitable compost worm is *Eisenia fetida* (Tiger Worm). It is not native to Australia but can be located in most parts of the country. The word *fetida* refers to the yellow secretion which comes from the worm when it is under stress. These worms are suited to breeding in worm farms, whereas some other varieties only breed in the soil. Start the worm farm with around 500 to 1,000 worms. If you don't know someone with a worm farm, starter packs can be bought from hardware stores.
- If the bin starts to smell, include more leaves or straw to allow more air in. If the smell is sour or you see a lot of small white worms, the bin has become acidic – add a small amount of garden lime in water and pour over the surface
- Make sure all the holes in the bottom box are taped over or sealed to prevent leaks
- Keep a damp cloth, carpet, newspaper or similar on top of the food in the bin. Plastic bins may become too wet, so make sure dry matter is included regularly and the bin has plenty of ventilation
- If you wish to take worm liquid from the bin, pour about one litre of water over the top layer and collect from the bottom bin. Rainwater is preferable to tap water but not essential
- Bedding material can be: corrugated cardboard, peat moss, coconut fibre, shredded paper, dried leaves, straw, hay, aged manure, coffee grounds
- Collect autumn leaves and store in a bag near the bin to add over the year. Worms love layers – leaves and skins such as banana, avocado, melon, pumpkin etc. These provide moisture and shelter for the worms as well as a food supply
- Some acidic foods such as onion, citrus, or dairy products are not recommended. They won't kill the worms but are not preferred food and will create an acidic environment if added in large quantities. Avoid using large quantities of anything. Worms will process meat products, but make sure quantities are small and that the bin is vermin-proof.

The many benefits of recycling organic waste

Many householders value earthworms as a waste management solution, re-mediating organic wastes on-site rather than sending to landfill. Up to 70% of waste sent to landfill is comprised of organic material which could be diverted and used to enhance our depleted soils. Worm farming is just one way of turning these wastes into a resource. It is a suitable system for apartment dwellers or those with small outdoor spaces. On larger properties worm farms can be used in conjunction with other garden waste compost systems.

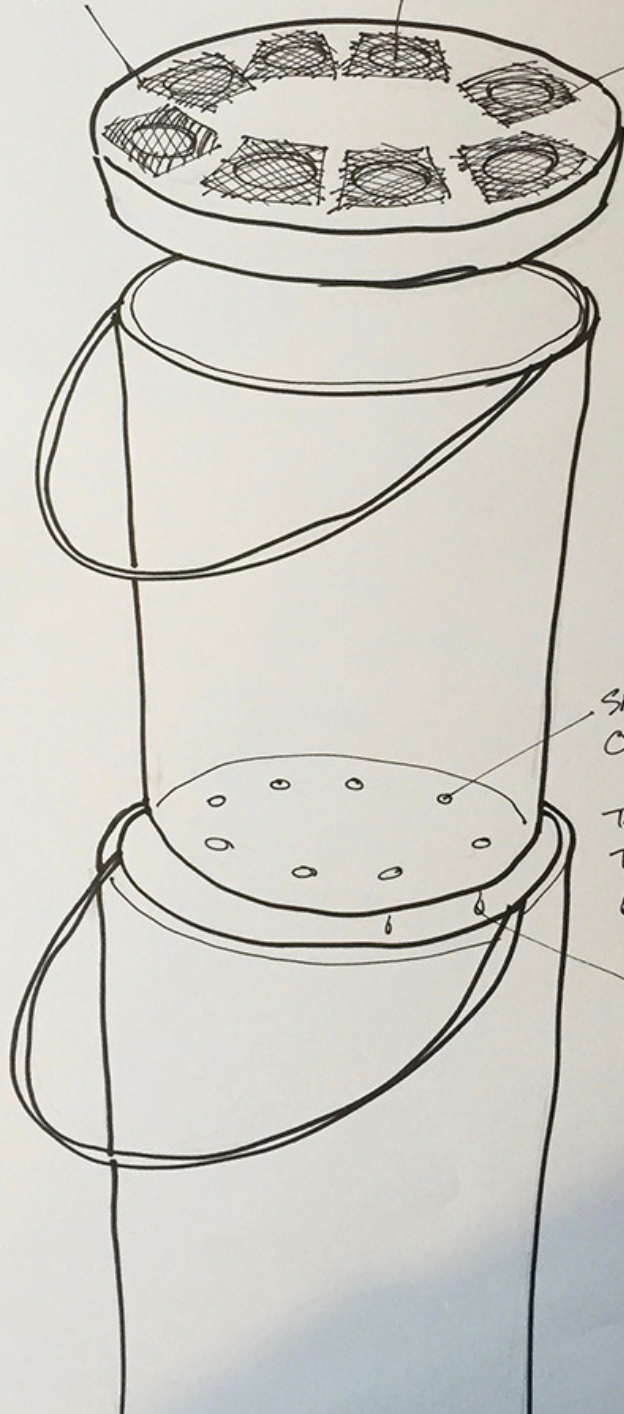
Where there are no options for either home composting or worm farming, systems like the **City to Soil** program, run most successfully by the Armidale Regional Council, are the most appropriate solution to keeping organic waste out of landfill and returning that resource to local agricultural soils.

Vermicast – the end product of earthworms – has a unique benefit to soils in that it is rich in nutrients and beneficial microbial populations. One method of encouraging a healthy worm population in your garden is to lay down cardboard and/or newspaper over an area of your garden, cover with mulch and manure and water regularly.

2. BUCKET WORM BIN (Greenshortz DIY)

USING 2 x 20 LITRE (APPROX.) BUCKETS

ONE LID, 8 x $\frac{3}{4}$ " HOLES DRILLED ON LID



PIECES OF MESH / OLD SCREENS
GLUED ON TOP OF HOLES
WITH WATERPROOF GLUE
& LEFT IN SUN TO DRY

CLEAN OUT ANY RESIDUAL
CHEMICALS / PAINT ETC.
FIRST WITH VINEGAR

SMALL HOLES DRILLED IN BOTTOM
OF THE TOP BUCKET

TOP BUCKET SITS INSIDE
THE OTHER BUCKET, WHICH IS
EMPTIED REGULARLY

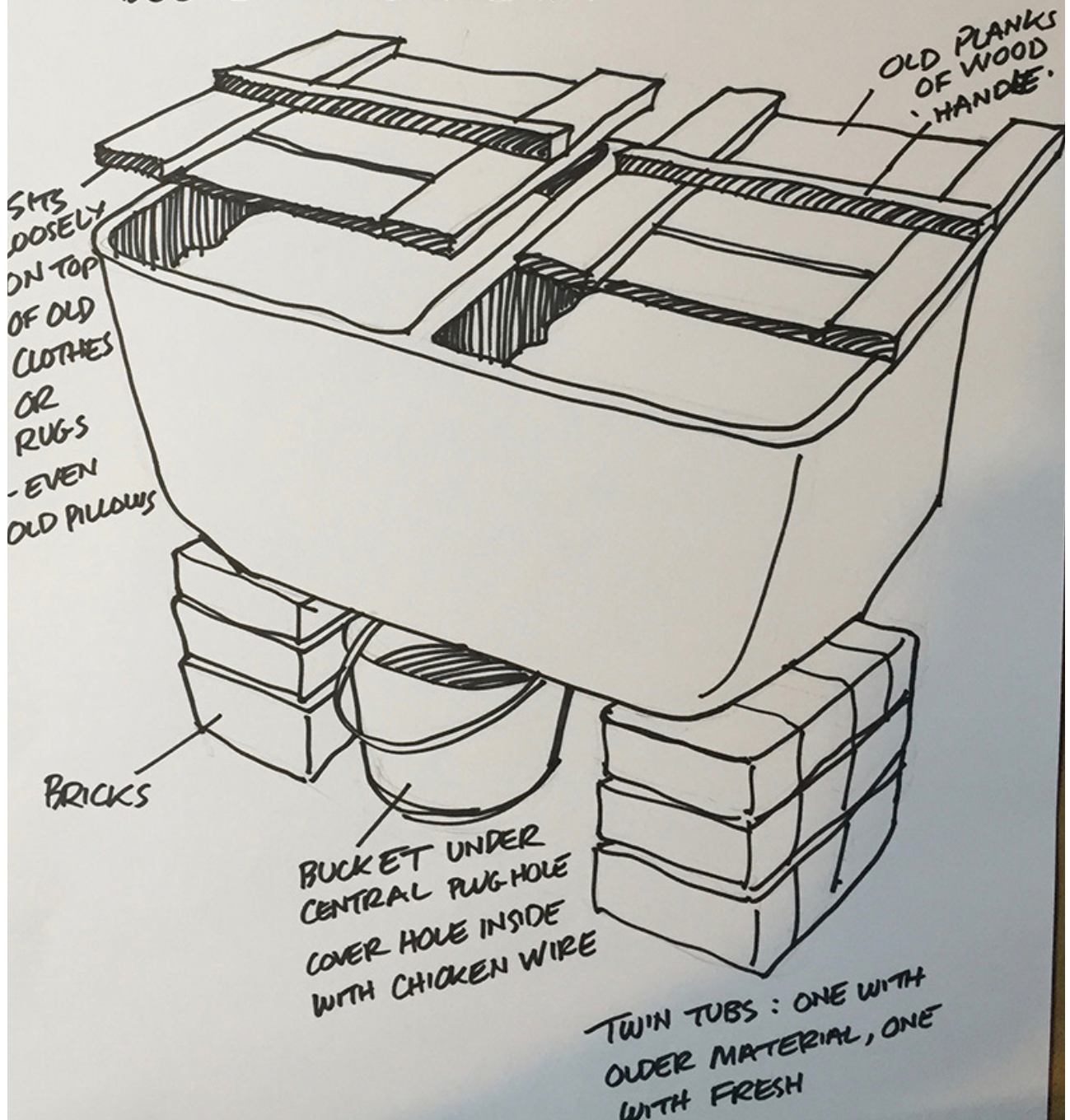
WORM WEE - DILUTE 10:1
AND USE ON PLANTS AS
FLUID FERTILISER

WORM CASTINGS : HARVEST
BY SHINING LIGHT ON WORMS
- THEY'LL GO LOWER

DILUTE CASTINGS IN RAINWATER
AND APPLY TO PLANTS

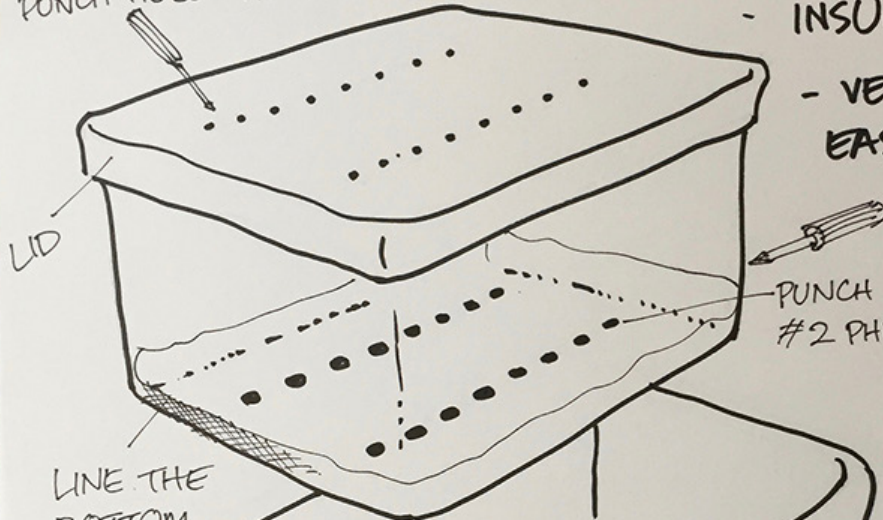
OLD CONCRETE LAUNDRY TROUGH

- INSULATES WELL
- DRAINAGE - 1 HOLE IN CENTRE
- BUCKET UNDERNEATH



POLYSTYRENE BOXES (from fruit shop or fish monger)

PUNCH HOLES WITH #1 PHILIPS HEAD

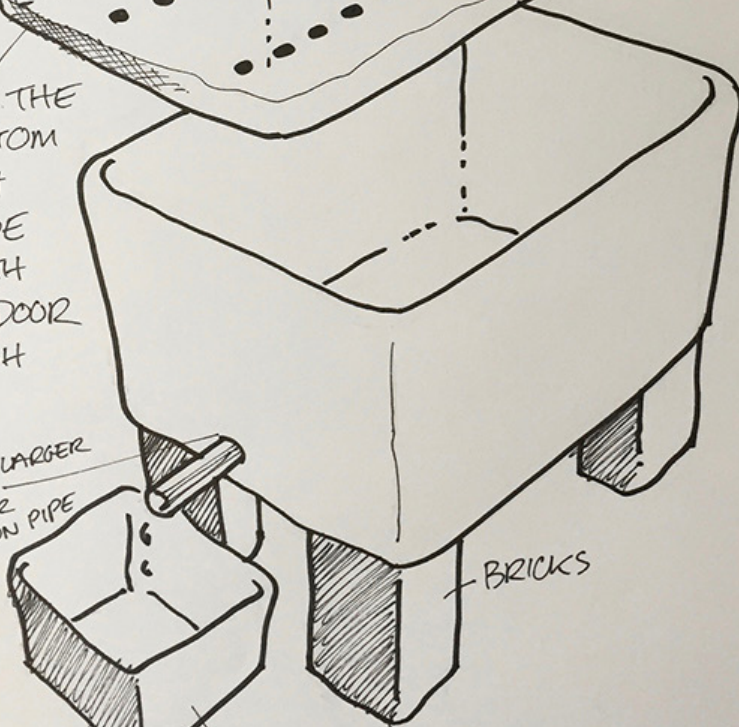


- INSULATES WELL
- VERY CHEAP & EASY TO MAKE

PUNCH HOLES WITH #2 PHILIPS HEAD

LINE THE BOTTOM WITH SHADE CLOTH OR DOOR MESH

PUNCH LARGER HOLE FOR IRRIGATION PIPE



TOP BOX CAN BE DEEPER THAN BOTTOM
LINE TOP BOX WITH BEDDING, ADD WORMS, COVER WITH DAMP NEWSPAPER

CONTAINER FOR WORM WEE

VALVE CAN BE ADDED TO INSIDE OF 'TAP'