



Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection



Backyard Exploration Series



Compost and Worms



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- Composting is the **decomposition** of organic material. **Vermicomposting** is a type of composting using a specific type of worm- red wigglers- to produce a better product .
- Compost is not soil, but a fertilizer for soil.

[Lets get an overview on worms and compost.](#)



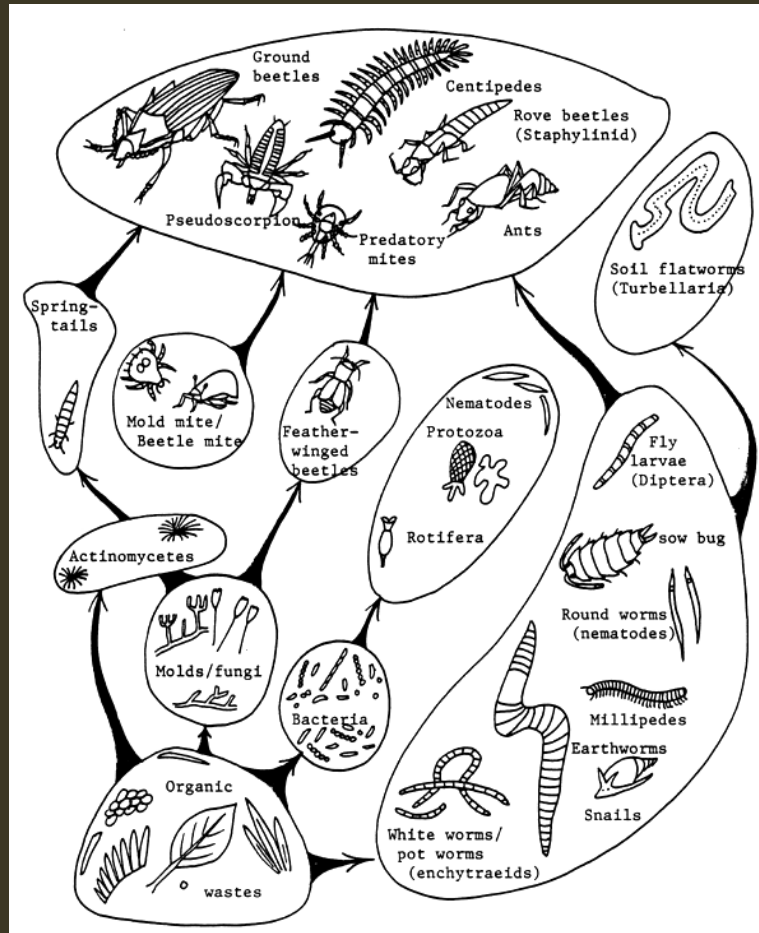


- Soil contains minerals and rock particles.
- When compost has decomposed and become mixed into the soil, it is called **humus**.
- Worms do the mixing in nature, adding air space and water to the soil structure. This mixing is called **aeration**.



Compost piles support a huge food web.

Second order consumers are **predators** and eat the first order organisms



Third order consumers would include birds, moles, raccoons....

First order consumers feed on the producers. This is the worm's **niche**.

Producer level-plant based food scraps



Worm Facts!

Worms are eating machines. Red wigglers consume half their weight a day. Their **castings** or poop, make up soil nutrients.

It is estimated that 25 worms live in every square foot of soil.

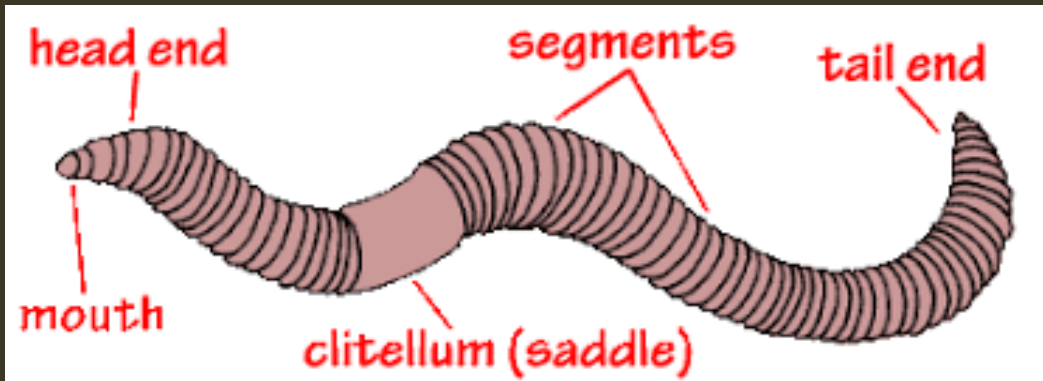
Worms survive 1-2 years in nature.

Generally, if cut in two a worm can regenerate a tail section but cannot **regenerate** a head section, so the back portion will die.

Worms produce 1-2 cocoons every seven days. These contain eggs which take 3 weeks to hatch, producing four worms.



Worm Anatomy



Setae are stiff bristles along the body of the worm that help them grip surfaces in order to move. This makes it hard to pull worms from their burrows. Setae aren't drawn on this image.

Take some time to [observe a worm in its environment](#). Remember to keep the worms moist and cool if handling them.

Do worms look the same?

Note their movement, and muscle coordination.

How do they use their body to sense the world?

WHEN FINISHED WITH OBERVATIONS, PLEASE RETURN WORMS TO A
SAFE PLACE .



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Worm Hunt Challenge - See if you can find these worms in your yard or garden.

- **Night Crawler** Large in size and firm muscular bodies, distinctive clitellum.



- **Red Wiggler**- Slim and reddish in color.



Have you seen this invasive worm!

- Jumping Worm aka Crazy Snake Worm

Thrashes wildly when disturbed.

Cream colored **clitellum** and sometimes the tail end will detach as a protective defense.



- They quickly eat leaf litter in forests, potentially stripping the food source for other wildlife and removing habitat for many animals.



Composting is easy to do.

- [Home Composting Information](#) : Basics PDF
- [Turn to Spoils into Soil](#) : A How to Video
- Gummy Worm vs Real worm: [Tasty activity](#)
What is “real” about gummy worm structure?

