

THE WORM MONGER

COMPOST HAPPENS

YOUR GUIDE TO BUILDING AND
MAINTAINING A WORM FARM
THAT'S THE SH!T

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THE
GROUND'S
GENEROSITY
TAKES
IN
OUR
COMPOST
AND
GROWS
BEAUTY!

TRY TO BE
MORE LIKE
THE GROUND

”

- RUMI

WHY YOU NEED TO BE COMPOSTING THAT SH!T



Composting worms are an excellent way to **REDUCE** your household organic **WASTE** to **ZERO** and an easy, thrifty way to reap a world of benefits in your garden. The compost they produce is rich, **ORGANIC** and will make your plants sing!

BE COOL
COMPOST THAT SH!T

PROMOTE GLOBAL WORMING, NOT GLOBAL WARMING

About half of all household waste is organic.
ORGANIC WASTE = COMPOSTABLE WASTE!
When you compost that sh!t, this is what happens....

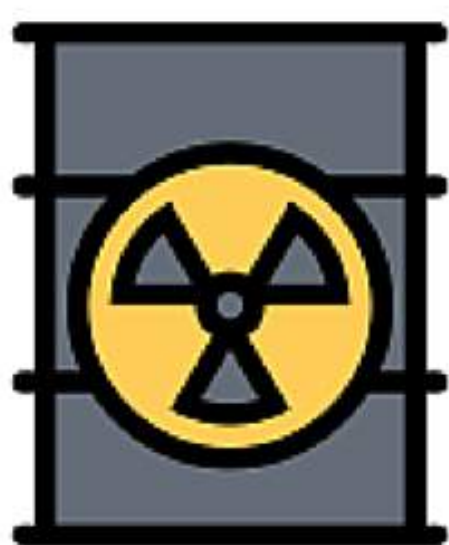


IT DOESN'T CONTRIBUTE TO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

When organic waste decomposes anaerobically, it produces the greenhouse gases methane and carbon dioxide. Greenhouse gases contribute to climate change, which will have a pretty sh!t impact on lives all over the planet, including yours.

IT DOESN'T GO TO LANDFILL

21 million tonnes of solid waste goes to landfill each year in Australia. 40% of this is organic waste. When organic waste goes to landfill it becomes anaerobic, which is sh!t for the planet.



IT DOESN'T BECOME A TOXIC LEACHATE

When rubbish breaks down anaerobically, it produces acids that contaminate groundwater and our waterways. That's the sh!t we want to drink and swim in.

IT PRODUCES A KICK ASS FERTILISER - VERMICOMPOST- THAT YOUR PLANTS LOVE

Vermicompost improves plant growth and disease resistance. It is also packed full of beneficial bacteria and microbes that improve the quality of your soil. It's great for your plants and great for the environment.

COMPOST = SERIOUSLY GOOD SH!T.



BE COOL

COMPOST THAT SH*T

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TURN YOUR SPOIL INTO SOIL!

HOW TO BUILD A WORM FARM

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WHAT YOU NEED

Worm farms can be built out of all sorts of things with little effort and material. This guide gives you instructions for a basic small-scale urban worm farm that you can keep in your garden, on your verandah or even indoors.



TWO STACKING CONTAINERS & A LID

Wood, plastic and styrofoam boxes all work.

How big? That depends how much waste you produce. Worm expert Mary Appelhof suggests you plan on 1/10 square metre surface area for each half kilo of waste. You don't need to get so technical though - you will learn with practise how big you need your farm to be and you can grow your worm farm accordingly.

Worms are prolific breeders and will regulate their own population according to the size of the container, so keep that in mind: the bigger the container, the more worms you will have, the more waste you can compost!



A DRILL

Or anything that will make holes in your containers. Worm holes. So if you are using styrofoam containers, for example, a pencil will suffice.



BEDDING & NEWSPAPER

This is the material you will line your worm farm with to make it extra comfortable for your worms. Damp newspaper is a cheap and easy option, but you can also use coconut coir, compost, or a peat block.

You will also need a newspaper or a hessian bag to cover your worms once they have been housed.



COMPOSTING WORMS

Composting worms (red or tiger) are available at your local hardware store. You can start with as little as a hand full. Composting worms reproduce quickly (they will double in population every 60-90 days) and they can eat their body weight in food daily, but remember that the amount of waste they manage will depend on the size of the population: the more worms you have, the more your farm will consume. Appelhof recommends starting with at least 1/2 a kilo!

HOW TO BUILD YOUR WORM FARM IN 8 SHORT STEPS

DRILL HOLES IN CONTAINER #1

Don't be shy - drill holes every 3-4cm. This will allow for plenty of drainage into container #2. Drill some extra holes in the lid. These will provide aeration.

STEP
01



STEP
02

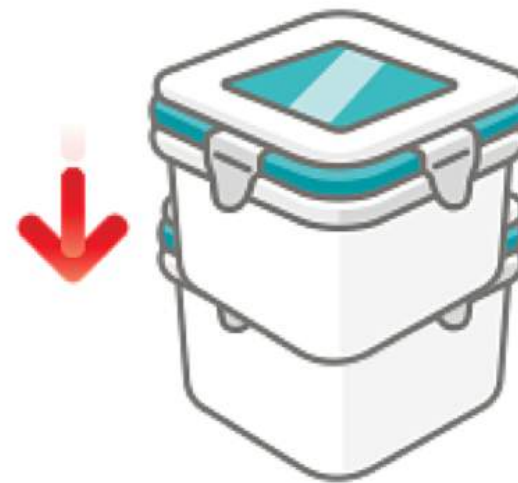
LINE CONTAINER #1

Dampen 2 or 3 sheets of newspaper and lie them flat in the bottom of the container.

STACK CONTAINERS

Stack container #1 inside container #2. Container #2 will collect excess fluid from the farm. This fluid is nutrient rich and can be used to fertilise your plants.

STEP
03



INTRODUCE BEDDING

A generous amount - around 10cm. You can use shredded newspaper or a combination of coir, peat, soil, compost and newspaper.

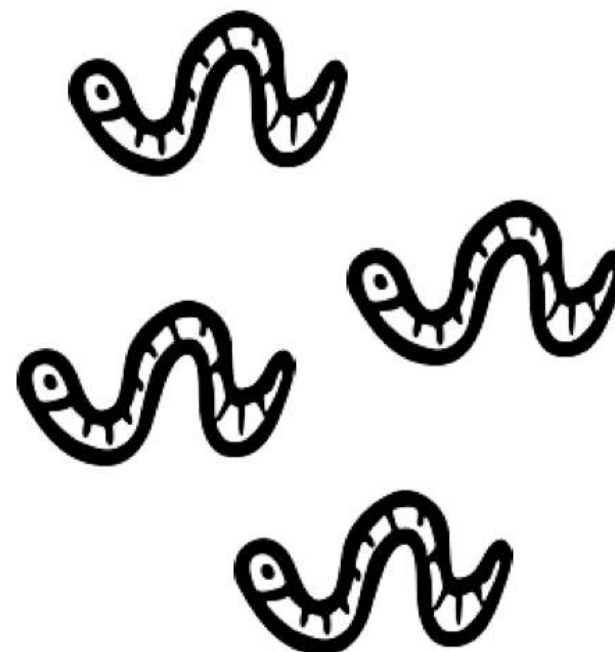


STEP
04

INTRODUCE WORMS

Bury your worms in the bedding and gently aerate with a garden fork.

STEP
05



COVER YOUR WORMS

with a layer of newspaper or a hessian bag and secure the lid on your container.

STEP
06



STEP
07

WAIT

Before you start feeding your worms give them a few days to settle into their new home.

FEED YOUR WORMS

Start transferring your kitchen scraps to the worm bin. Tips for feeding can be found in Chapter 3 Page 10). Remember to replace the damp newspaper or your hessian bag to the top of your farm. This will keep the moisture in and minimise the food's exposure to the flies.

STEP
08



HARVESTING THE GOOD SH!T

Your farm will produce two products:

WORM LEACHATE

This is the liquid that will drain into container #2. There are conflicting schools of thought on the benefits/harms of leachate. Erring on the side of caution, our advice is use it on your plants but water it down 10/1 and don't feed it to your edible plants.

CASTINGS/VERMICOMPOST

This is the sh!t (literally). Once the worms have processed your food scraps, their excrement becomes a mighty fine fertiliser. It will take 10-12 weeks before you can harvest the good stuff. It will look like coffee grounds when its ready to go. Harvesting castings really requires you to **GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY!** There are a few methods you can try and we have listed them in **CHAPTER 4**.

WHICH SCRAPS MAKE THE BEST CRAP?

WHAT TO FEED YOUR WORMS

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TO FEED

OR

NOT TO FEED

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF FEEDING WORMS



What to feed your worms

Fruit & Vegetable
peel & scraps

Egg shells

Tea bags/leaves &
coffee grounds

Shredded
newspaper/egg
cartons/cardboard

Leftovers



What not to feed your worms

Meat waste & bones

Dairy Products

Pet poo

Citrus

Onions & onion family
members



We consider that the above DOs and DON'Ts are the best approach for SMALL, URBAN FARMS.

BUT, there are many and varied opinions on what you can and can't feed your worms. Pet poo is probably the only 'food' in the list that is universally agreed on as a DON'T.

If you do feed your worms anything from the DON'T list, it's probably not the end of the worm. Monitor your farm and see how it copes - it will probably be fine! And if it's not, you are lucky we have Chapter 5.

SORTING YOUR SH!T

A GUIDE TO HARVESTING CASTINGS

Our primary advice when it comes to harvesting your worm castings is

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY!

If you are successful in your endeavours, your plants will reap the reward of enriched soil and you can boast your contribution to **SOIL CONSERVATION**. This is no mean feat and you should be proud as poop!

To prepare yourself for the task, wait until your worms have digested their last feed. This will mean you won't have to sift through food scraps and your castings will be ripe for the taking.

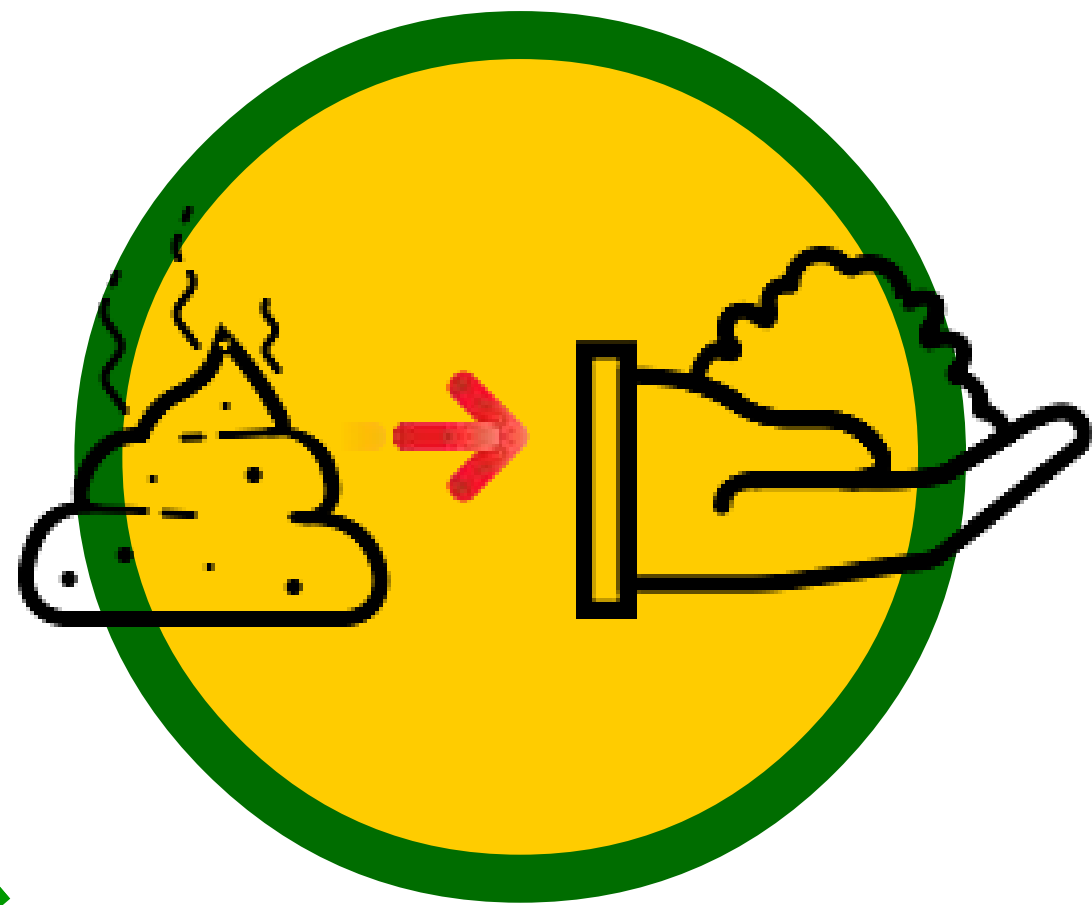
CAN YOU DIG IT?

YES YOU CAN!

4 METHODS FOR SORTING YOUR SH!T

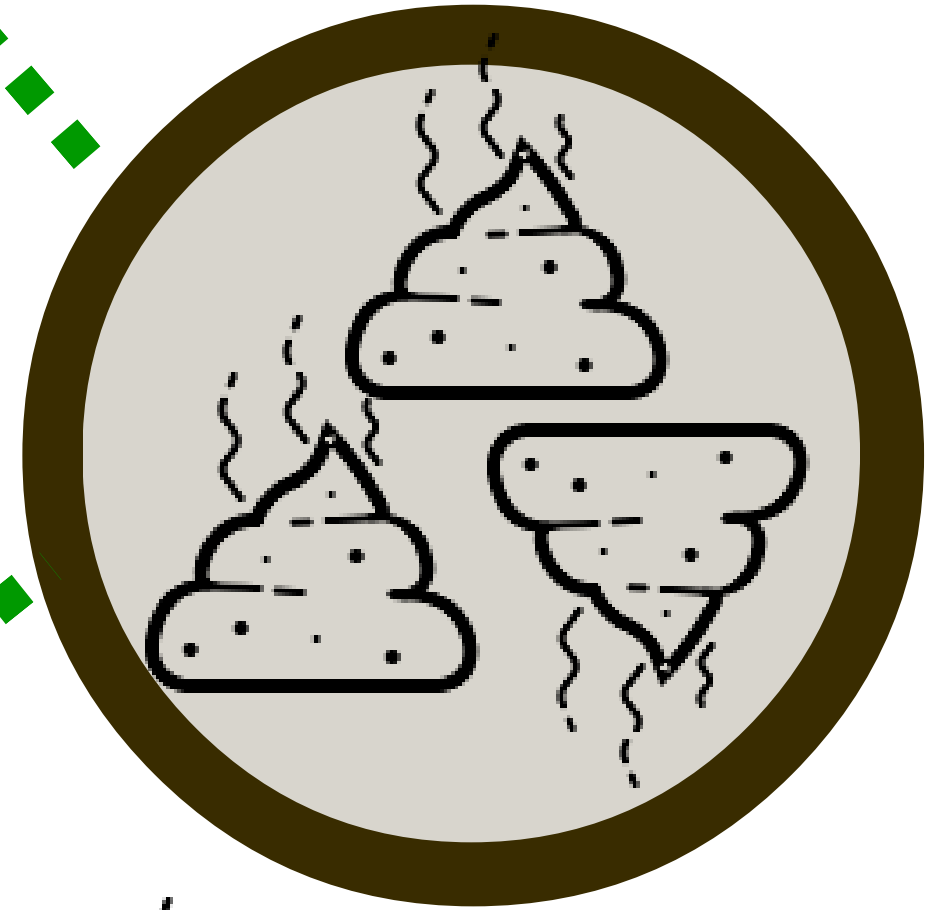
1. The 'Dump & Sort'

Dump the contents of your farm out onto a plastic sheet or newspaper and sift your worms from the castings with your hands.



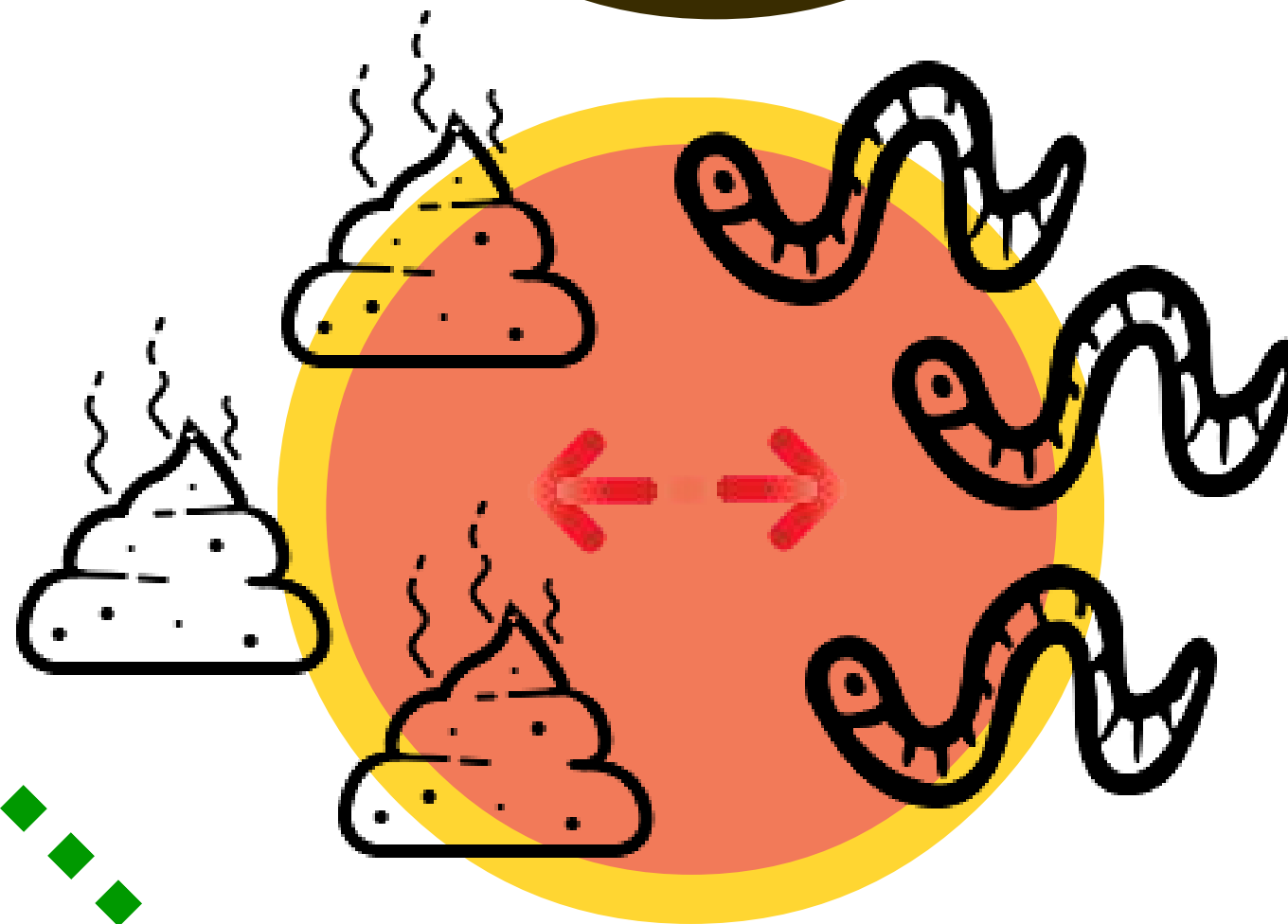
2. The 'Multi-Dump'

Take dumping to the next level by creating multiple small piles on a plastic sheet or newspaper. Your worms will burrow down to avoid the light. Once they have done so, you are free to collect the casting from the top of each pile.



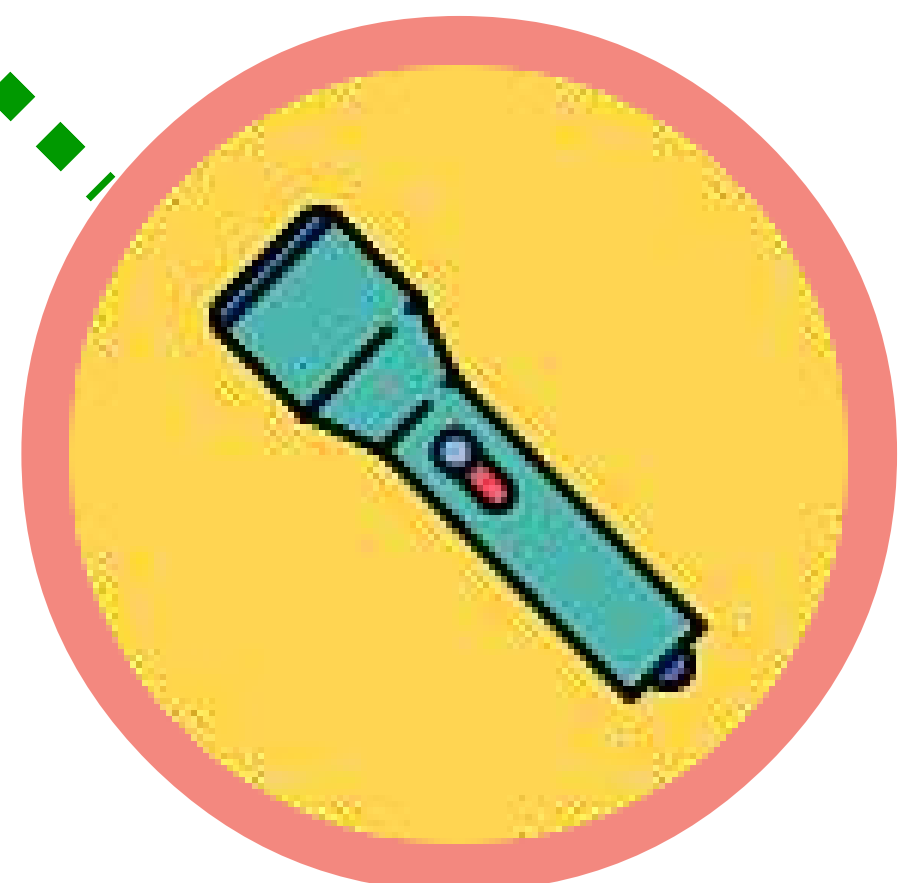
3. The 'Dung Divided'

Place food in one half of your farm only. Your worms will seek out the source of the food and congregate in that half of your farm leaving you to collect the castings from the other half.



4. The 'Lighten-Your-Load'

The little guys do not like light. Take a hessian bag or other material with holes big enough for your worms to fit through. Spread some of the contents of your bin on top of the bag and place the bag on top of your farm. Shine a light on your worms or take them out into the sunshine. The worms will burrow back through the bag leaving a layer of castings for the taking on top.



YOUR COMPOST DON'T STINK?

GOOD FOR YOU - THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE AIMING FOR! BUT
CHANCES ARE YOU WILL FACE ONE PROBLEM OR
ANOTHER IN TIME AND THAT'S WHAT THIS CHAPTER IS
FOR
TROUBLESHOOTING

We think the key to HEALTHY WORMS comes down to the following 4 elements:

1

FOOD (the right stuff and the right amount)

2

AERATION (enough to breathe)

3

TEMPERATURE (neither extreme hot nor extreme cold)

4

MOISTURE (not too wet, not too dry)

Keeping these elements BALANCED will keep your farm healthy and thriving! Worm farming is not a precise science and striking the right balance will be a matter of TRIAL and ERROR.

You will get a 'feel' for it as you and your worms get to know one another. In that process, it's likely that you will doubt your prowess as a worm farmer and you may come up against a problem or two.

DON'T LOSE YOUR SH!T.

These helpful troubleshooting tips should get you through it.

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COMPOST HAPPENS

IF YOUR WORM FARM IS STINKING THE HOUSE OUT....

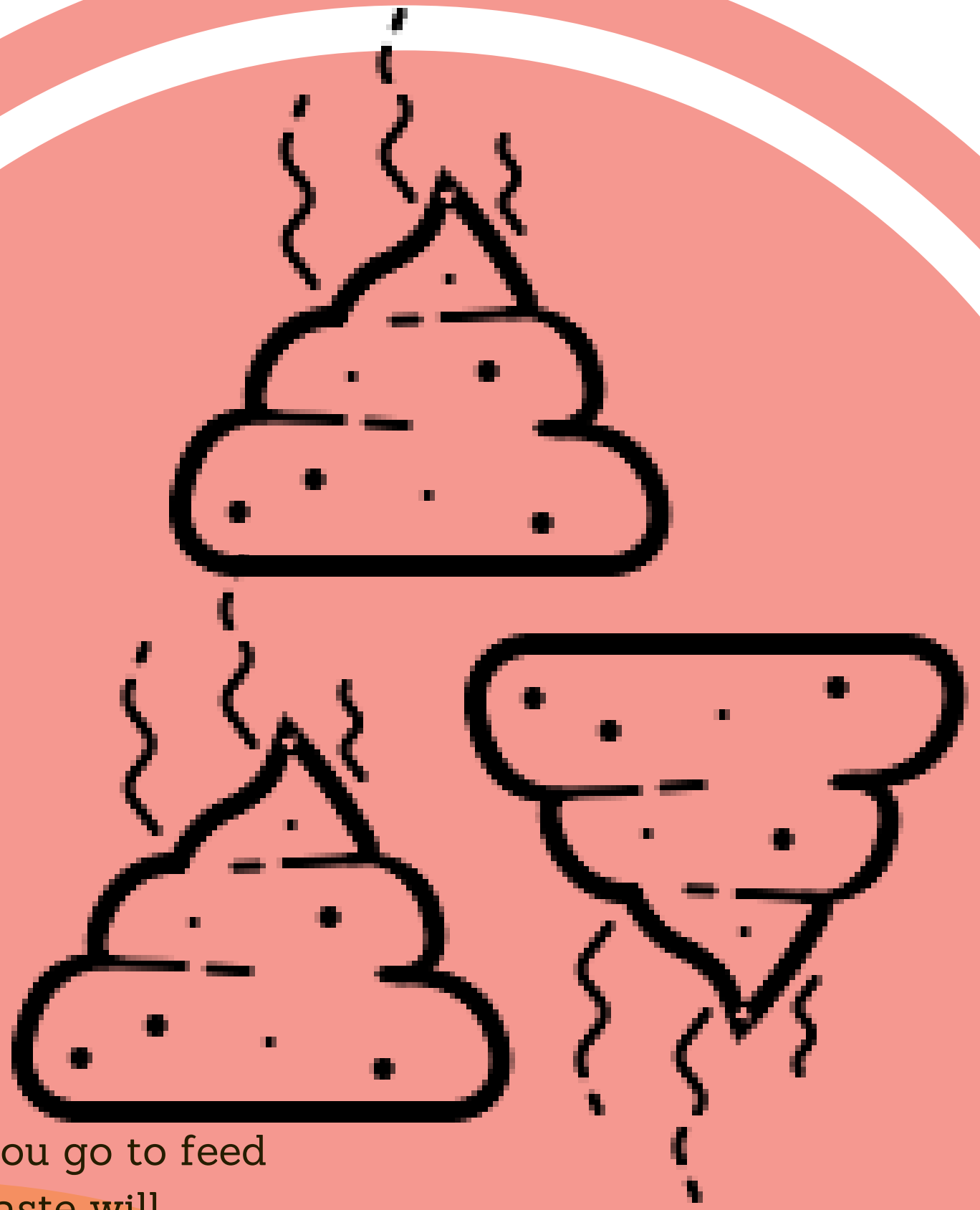
If it's in good condition, your worm farm will be ODOUR FREE.

It will have a musty, EARTHY kind of smell, but it shouldn't be foul and you shouldn't be able to smell it when the lid is on.

The MOST COMMON reason that a worm farm smells is OVERFEEDING.

It is easy to overfeed your worms! Especially while they are still new and you are gauging what your worms are capable of consuming.

If your worms aren't processing all their food before you go to feed them again, chances are some of the waste will rot before it's processed – and this will cause a bad ass SMELL.



HOW DO I FIX THAT SH!T?

REMOVE any rotting food from your worm farm and aerate the space with damp scrunched newspaper or cardboard. Gently AERATE the bedding with a garden fork. EASE OFF the feeding until your worms have processed what is already there. As a general rule, only add new food when the worms are close to finishing what is already in the farm. If you have the time, process your worm food to make it easy for your worms to eat.

RUBB!SH TIP:

Put your scraps in a blender or food processor to break them down into bite sized morsels. Watch how much quicker the worms consume!

COMPOST HAPPENS

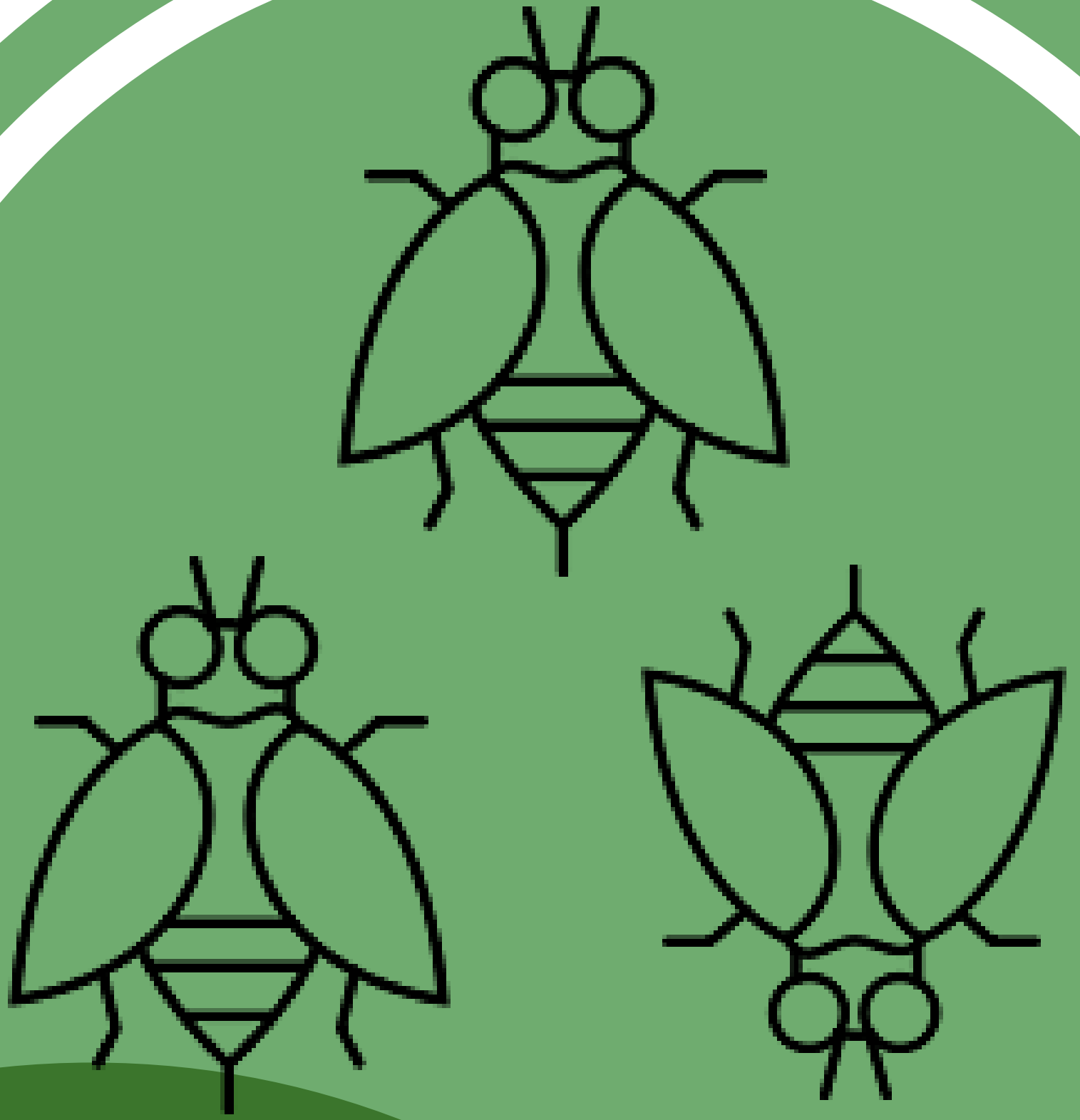
IF YOUR WORM FARM IS ATTRACTING PESTS.....

Your worm farm will attract BUGS, MITES and FLIES.

This is NOT usually a PROBLEM for the health of the farm itself – bugs will usually work with and eat harmoniously with your worms and may even improve their conditions.

BUT they will become a problem for your household if they are not contained within the farm and become visible and unsightly around the farm.

Excessive flies and insects are also usually a result of OVERFEEDING.



HOW DO I FIX THAT SH!T?

DON'T FEED the worms again until they have finished the last meal you fed them.
COVER food scraps with some damp scrunched up NEWSPAPER so that the scraps are not exposed to your worm farm's lid.

RUBB!SH TIP:

Odour attracts flies. 'Bury' your food scraps in your worm farm rather than dump it directly on top. This will minimise odour and ensure flies can't lay their eggs in the exposed food.

COMPOST HAPPENS

IF YOUR WORMS ARE TRYING TO ESCAPE....

You will have the odd worm try to 'escape' every now and again.

This is NOT a problem – they generally return to their source of food.

If you notice your worms are trying to **ESCAPE EN MASSE**, however, this is a **PROBLEM**. It is likely because the conditions in the farm have become **BAD**.

There are a few reasons why this would occur:

- *OVERFEEDING
- *LACK OF AIR
- *The farm is TOO WET
- *The farm has become ACIDIC

HOW DO I FIX THAT SH!T?

AERATION holes in your design should provide ample air to the system as well as to provide the correct level of moisture for the farm, so the most likely cause for escaping worms will be overfeeding or excess liquid as a result of overfeeding. If you are worried that your worm farm isn't aerated enough, drill some holes in the sides or lid of your farm.

REMOVE any rotting food from your farm and gently **AERATE** the bedding with a garden fork.

Give the worms a few days to **RECOVER** before feeding, and then introduce a small amount of food and monitor their consumption before feeding again.

DON'T feed the worms anything high in acid (eg. scraps that contain citrus or vinegar).

COVER the food scraps with some dry scrunched up newspaper, which will absorb excess moisture.

COMPOST HAPPENS

IF YOUR WORMS ARE DYING....

If you notice carnage in your worm farm, it is likely that the conditions in the farm have become BAD ASS.

There are a few reasons this could occur:

*OVERFEEDING

*The farm is TOO WET

*The farm is TOO DRY

*The temperature is TOO HOT

* The temperature is TOO COLD

The design of your farm will rule out most of the above occurring.

For example, the surrounding bedding in your farm will moderate extreme hot and cold temperatures and insulate your worms.

Aeration holes will also provide the correct level of moisture for the farm, which should ensure the farm is never too wet or dry. But, sh!t happens to the best of us, and at some stage you may face wormicide in your farm.

If this does happen, DON'T DESPAIR You can bring your worms back from the brink (although this will involve getting your hands dirty).

HOW DO I FIX THAT SH!T?

If you are experiencing very HOT or very COLD temperatures, MOVE your farm to a warmer/cooler space where it will be protected from the elements

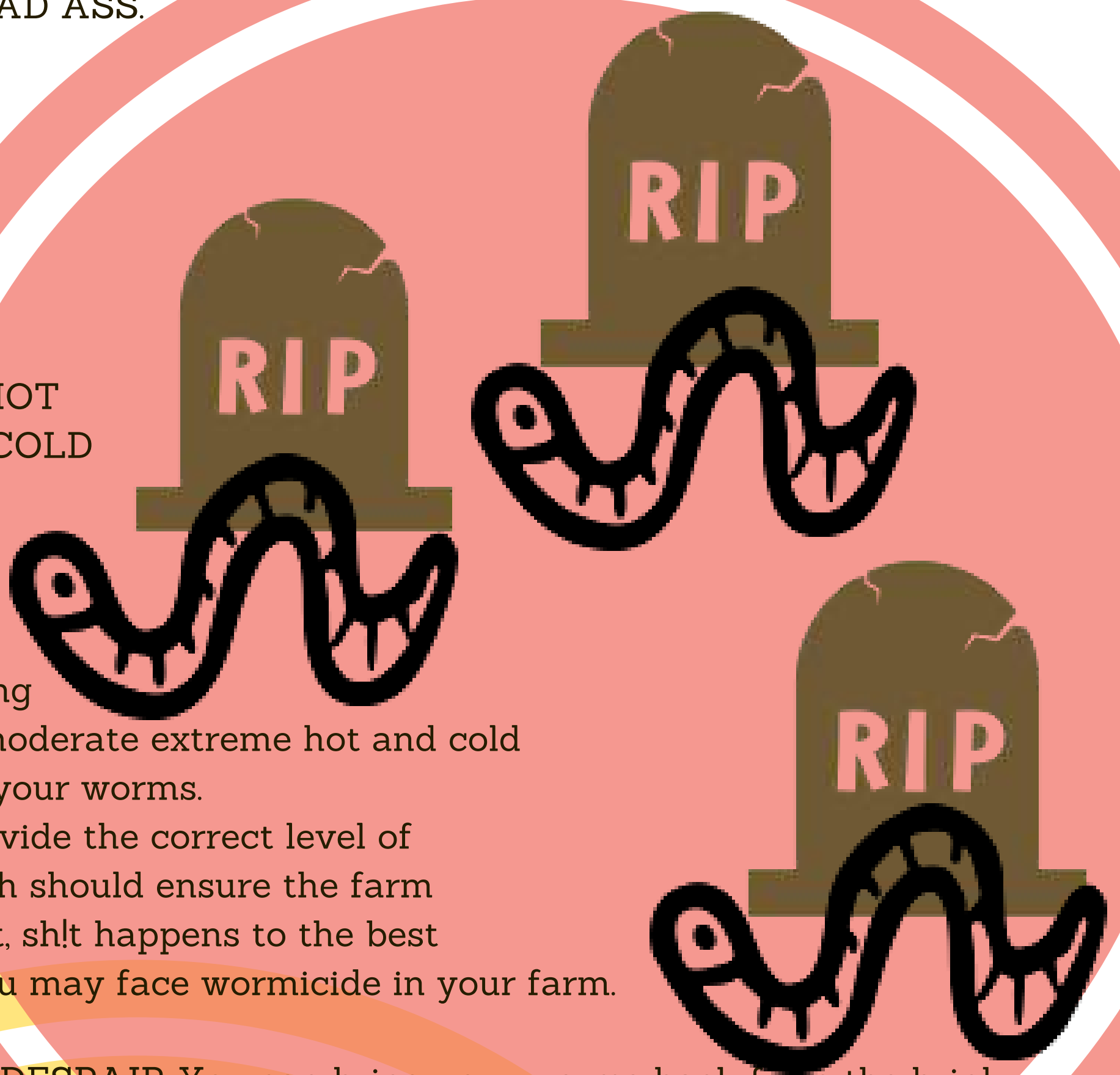
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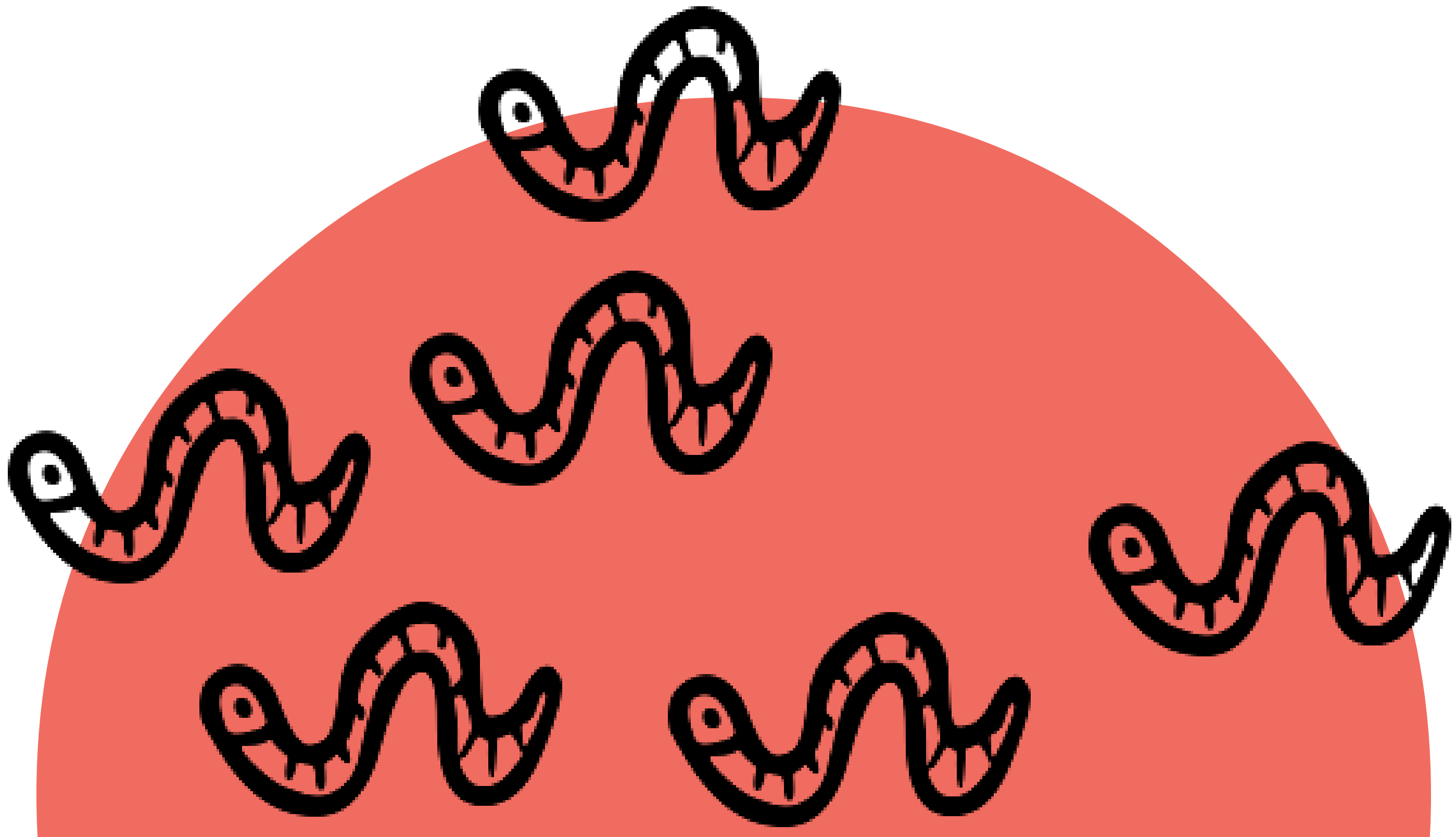
RUBB!SH TIP

Don't be scared to get your hands dirty and get to know your worms. The more you engage with your worms, the better you will begin to understand how to make them thrive!

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GOT QUESTIONS?



ASK THE WORM MONGER!

Drop us line [HERE](#), sign up to our [BLOG](#), and REMEMBER.....

**WHEN SH!T HAPPENS,
TURN IT INTO FERTILISER!**

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WHEN IT COMES TO
ORGANIC WASTE,
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