

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

Investigation 1: Systems

The redworm or red wiggler (*Eisenia fetida*) is a very thin and relatively small earthworm, about 3–8 centimeters (cm) long. This is the common species of redworm used in vermicomposting. Although the redworms are small, they can shred and consume nearly half their weight in food every day. They eat decaying leaves and other decaying plant parts that have been broken down by the action of bacteria, fungi, and microorganisms. Actually, their main food source is the bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms on the decaying plant matter, but they also consume the organic matter on which the microorganisms live. In worm bins, redworms feed on grass clippings and kitchen scraps, including vegetables, fruit, egg shells, coffee grounds, paper, and cardboard.

Here are some of the kinds of kitchen waste that redworms eat: potato peels; coffee grounds with filters; tea bags; apple cores; crushed egg shells; stale bread; parings of cucumber, carrots, squash, lettuce, melon rinds, and so forth. If potatoes are used, they should be cooked.

Here are some of the things that are not good for redworms: meat, fat, oil.

Make a list of the kitchen waste that your home produces that redworms could eat and would be good to use in a worm bin. Keep the list for at least a week.