

Harvesting and Storage of Vermicompost

1. Harvesting of Vermicompost

When to Harvest:

- Vermicompost is usually ready in **45–60 days**, depending on temperature and waste material.
- It is mature when it becomes **dark brown or black, crumbly**, and has an **earthy smell**.

Harvesting Methods:

Manual Method (Heap & Light Method):

- Create small heaps of vermicompost.
- Earthworms move away from light (they are photophobic), so place the heap under sunlight or artificial light.
- Remove the top layer (vermicast) every 5–10 minutes.
- Repeat until most worms move to the bottom.
- Collect worms separately to reuse.

Side Harvesting:

- Push the compost to one side of the bed/tank.
- Add fresh organic waste to the empty side.
- In a few days, worms migrate to the fresh waste side.
- Collect the vermicompost from the old side.

Screening:

- Pass the compost through a mesh (2–4 mm) to separate fine vermicompost from larger particles and worms.

2. Storage of Vermicompost

Ideal Storage Conditions:

- **Moisture Content:** Maintain around **20–25% moisture**.
- **Shade:** Store in a **cool, dry, and shaded area** to avoid direct sunlight.
- **Containers:** Use **gunny bags, cloth sacks, or breathable bins** – never airtight plastic bags.
- **Aeration:** Ensure proper **air circulation** to keep microbial life active.
- **Pest Protection:** Keep the storage area **pest- and rodent-free**.

Shelf Life:

- Vermicompost can be stored for **up to 6 months** if conditions are ideal.
- Microbial activity may decline over time, so fresher compost is better.

Summary:

Step	Key Points
Harvesting	Done after 45–60 days, use light or migration method to separate worms
Storage	Cool, shaded, breathable environment; maintain 20–25% moisture