

# Earthworms and Redworms

## A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

### Immediate Care and Handling

As soon as your shipment arrives, open the shipping container and inspect your order, discarding any dead worms. Keep worms cool and moist in the shipping materials. Earthworms require cool temperatures of 15° C (60° F) or lower. This makes it difficult to maintain them for long unless you have a cold storage or outdoor facility. Redworms tolerate higher temperatures, up to 25° C (77° F), which makes them a much better choice for extended classroom use, but anything above 29° C (84° F) can be harmful.

### Culture

We do not recommend attempting to culture earthworms, but redworms are easily cultured. Any commercial worm-growing system will do if you follow the instructions that come with it; however, almost any flat-bottomed container that provides darkness, drainage, and air is suitable. For composting, loosely cover the bottom of the container with 6 to 10 cm damp (not sopping wet) shredded newspaper. Use conditioned water to dampen the newspaper. (See General Guidelines for information on conditioning tap water.) On top of this, scatter any vegetable matter that is handy. Add the worms and cover with dry shredded newspaper. As the worms compost the organic matter, including newspaper, add new layers of vegetable matter and dry shredded paper. It will probably not be necessary to add more water.

### FAQ's

*How can I tell the difference between male and female earthworms?*

Each redworm and earthworm is both male and female. In a copulating pair, each worm gives and receives sperm.

*Our worms died after a few weeks. What happened?*

Although they are land animals, these worms are dependent on moisture. They breathe through their skins, which must be kept moist at all times. Be certain that they have adequate moisture. Use only aged tap water. In a few cities, aging the tap water does not remove the chlorine compounds, so use a special water conditioner in those areas. Keep both redworms and earthworms under darkened conditions because sunlight can kill them. Remember that earthworms need cool temperatures.

*Where can I find earthworms?*

In most soils. They are absent from dry desert areas, and some soils are too acidic for earthworms. Redworms are more common in and around compost and manure piles.

*What is the difference between an earthworm and a redworm?*

Other than average size, the differences in body structure are technical and difficult to observe. They do differ in behavior. Redworms live in the upper 25 cm or so of the soil, usually under a thick layer of litter or other organic matter. Earthworms go much deeper and build vertical, more or less permanent burrows in which they live.

**Problems?** We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

**Orders and replacements:** 1-800-334-5551 then select Customer Service

**Technical Support and Questions:** [caresheets@carolina.com](mailto:caresheets@carolina.com)



© 2008 Carolina Biological Supply Company