

# **BUCHANAN'S**

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## **NATIVE PLANTS**

### **Using Worms Castings -- The Best Soil Amendment Ever**

*Worm castings provide nutrients, enzymes, beneficial microbes and growth hormones to your soil. When combined, these elements increase seed germination, improve soil structure, increase water retention, activate organic fertilizers, spur on healthy growth and fight off disease.*

- When planting transplants, put castings in the hole before the plant. Use a small handful when planting from 4" pots, a large handful for gallon pots and a couple of handfuls for three gallon pots.
- Use castings whenever you fertilize. Rake back the mulch. Apply a thin layer of castings over the soil. Sprinkle an organic fertilizer such as MicroLife over the castings. Re-apply the old mulch and add new. Do this in the spring and the fall.
- When mixing potting or bedding soil, use up to 20% castings in the mix. You can use less to suit your budget – even 5% will make a big difference.
- The enzymes and hormones in castings help seeds germinate. Place ¼" to ½" castings on top of your seed bed. Push the seeds down through the castings to their appropriate depth.
- Watering your container plants with a dilute worm casting extract (see back) is a good way to maintain soil health. Using the extract to water in new plants is another way to use worm castings when transplanting – especially large plants and trees.
- People who brew their own compost tea (more complicated than extract) find that using castings for the compost element is very effective because castings have a much higher level of active microbes.

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### **Making Worm Casting Extract – Way Easier Than Compost Tea**

- Use two buckets. Fill one bucket  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water (preferably rain water). Put 3 cups of fresh worm castings in the other bucket. Pour the water over the castings to mix them well and aerate the water. Pour the water and castings back and forth a few times.
- The extract will have some solids left in the bottom of the bucket. That's OK. But if the solution sits for a while, the castings will begin to settle out. If this happens, just pour the mixture back and forth again. This also keeps the extract aerated for the beneficial microbes.
- The extract stays good as long as you pour it back and forth every hour or so. It's best to use each batch the same day you make it.
- You can mix the extract 50:50 with water. Use this mixture occasionally when you water your plants. Use the extract full strength to water in new plants.