
Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by vt_worms - 2009/07/10 17:00

Howdy, anyone willing to share info on how to separate cocoons from castings?

I'm currently screening castings with a 1/8" home-made rotary screen. It does extremely well at separating the worms and larger chunks from the castings, but allows many cocoons to fall through.

Even if my harvester did catch cocoons (3/32" or 1/16" screen), there's still the labor of separating the cocoons from the larger chunks also caught by the screen.

How is this done commercially? I don't have any intention of selling cocoons (way too small for that), but am just curious how it's done.

Thanks, Jase

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by Foremole - 2009/08/23 20:55

I have the same question. With my worm factory I place the finished bin on top and then leave the light on over it. Between drying and the light I am able to get the worms to move into the layer below. Then layers are manually removed. Then I wait two to three weeks and start looking for the babies and there are still lots of cocoons. This process is getting tiring, not to mention time consuming.

So I too would like some hints, advice, etc.

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by wellsworms - 2009/08/25 12:54

:(imho you would need to screen twice once with 1/4 " mesh then with 3/16" or an appropriate metric sizeB)

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by Paratrooper - 2009/08/26 00:06

I have read where some folks wait for a period of time for the cocoons to become worms and are easier separated. Some will add some pumpkin pie filling in a strip across the top so as to attract them after a couple of weeks. At that time the last of the worms are harvested and the vermicompost is used, sold, traded or whatever.

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by digger51 - 2009/08/28 07:11

I had tried to pick out cocoons also tried to wait until they hatched. All I found is that it is way to labor intensive. The cocoons and small worms go with the casting. whether I use them in my garden or sell them. Just not worth the time it takes to clean them out.

Digger

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by captain.koons - 2009/09/01 09:42

I am too searching for an easy way to harvest cocoons. My girlfriend tried researching for me and she found a place recommending water seperation... the original poster claimed the cocoons float a reply said they infact sink but you can scoop them up easy when in water.

I'll try this myself in a few months I recently harvested all my bins and started new ones.

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by jeffw - 2009/11/02 10:58

I am going to try blowing light air from under 1/8 filter to see if you can semi-separate them maybe.

Or a black light maybe? I am testing now to see if worms react to a black light.

Jeff <http://www.wormdigest.org/images/fbfiles/images/a.jpg>

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by Swimmus - 2009/11/20 19:04

Sorting cocoons by hand has been the truly only effective way i have found. I have 2 boys who do it an hour or two after harvest (depending on the amount as well).

Then If I have time, will then let the compost set and will bait the new hatched worms before we sell it or use it.

I have tried the water method- Gets the compost wet and then it has to dry. Still need to sort after ward- too much trouble for our situation.

Screens size helps but only gets about 1/3 to 1/2.

So I harvest using 1/8 and 1/4 screens. I get some that makes it past the 1/8 screen into 1/4. The bigger sort is the start of a new bin, the boys then pick out what they can from the harvest. I let it go most of the time figuring I get 60-70% of the cocoons.

We sort about 50-100 pounds a week in the season.

Re:Harvesting / Collecting Worm Cocoons

Posted by mikelewis - 2011/08/09 01:41

I'll share with you a few useful tips I've picked up for the collection of cocoons and moving them from container to container.

When in the field, I will often take a wide but fine paintbrush. Cocoons can then be brushed into waiting containers. I usually then remove the workers (when they are not needed) by hand.

As for moving them individually from container to container, a fine makeup brush will do. The end should be no more than 2mm across. This can be made slightly wet with clean water to first pickup the cocoon, then simply hold the brush in the air over the container you wish to drop it into and simply tap the middle of the brush on the rim or flick it with your finger to drop the cocoon. If the cocoons are not being dropped into a container with workers that will look after them, ensure no excess water is left on the cocoon as they will mould much more quickly if they are damp.