

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

**Q. Dear Twig: What's the stuff that comes out of the back end of a worm called?**

A. Is this a trick question? Yes? No? No? OK. The stuff that comes from a worm's back end indeed has an actual name. In fact it has a couple of them. And they don't rhyme with toody or moop or gung. Though that would be cool if they did. One of them rhymes with flanure.

So. You can call them **castings**.

Or you can call them **worm manure**.

Or you can call them **vermicompost**. "Vermi" is Latin for worm.

Just don't call them late for dinner. And also, probably, don't eat them for dinner. (Even hot sauce didn't help, blech.) But, yes, you can feed them to plants for their dinner. In

fact that's good advice. Full of natural, wormy goodness — digested **organic matter**, **nutrients** and millions of helpful **microbes** — castings help make plants grow great.

Garden stores sell them as plant food — fertilizer.

Yep, worms and worm doo-doo do good things for plants. And also for soil and for water. Just how they do it you can find out on Earth Day. Ohio State's free **Scarlet, Gray and Green Fair** (Wooster, April 22, 1-7 p.m.) has hooked an exhibit called "Earthworms and Water." You'll round up worms. Learn the types. And dig how they do what they do!

Annelidally,

Twig

From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).



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**Notes:** Wormy/vermi sources included Ohio State University Extension's "Rearing Earthworms" fact sheet, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2133.html>; North Carolina A&T State University's "Earthworm Composting" 4-H activity guide (nice!) (ages 9-12), <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fourh/old/publications/curriculum/wildlife/9-12-worms.pdf>; and New Mexico State's "Vermicomposting" fact sheet, [http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/\\_h/h-164.pdf](http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-164.pdf).

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Unearth more fair facts: <http://www.wcsen.org/WCSGGF/>. I wriggle with anticipation!

