

Texas Worm Ranch

The Texas Worm Ranch (TWR) is a small vermicomposting business located in Garland, Texas. The company raises Red Wiggler Worms to harvest castings which are sold as organic fertilizer for local organic growers. TWR provides the resources and knowledge necessary for successful composting and small-scale farming without the use of chemical or genetic modifications. The mission of TWR is to encourage locals to produce their own healthy food through proper organic gardening techniques. The Texas Worm Ranch has created several organic gardens across East Dallas and provides organic food to local Farmer's Markets, as well as various vermicomposting products.



<http://www.txwormranch.com/worms.html>

Internship Objectives

- Manage an experiment to identify the most effective bedding for increased reproduction of Red Wiggler Worms
- Design and implement an organized system to record the weekly status and amendments of 60+ worm beds
- Contribute to efficient gardening care, casting harvesting, order processing, and other daily warehouse activities.



Relationship to Career Goals

My career goals have been focused on waste management and outreach. I hope to improve the convenience and awareness of proper recycling. At Texas Worm Ranch I have learned most about organic waste management and the logistics of reusing and recycling.

TWR has local food waste, manure, lumber, and other waste redirected from landfills to the warehouse in order to feed the worms, create new worm bedding, structure garden beds, etc. I have gained a new perspective on what it means to recycle material – I'd only ever known residential recycling, but small and big business have many more options when it comes to managing waste. I hope to make these options known and easy to implement on a large scale.



Internship Experience



My experience has been one of unparalleled physical learning. I have connected dots between the soil science, plant pathology, and microbiology classrooms to the science occurring in each of the worm beds and gardens at TWR. Most of all, I have gained a clearer understanding and appreciation for the impeccable exchanges of agronomy. The chemical complexity of agriculture is vast; a logical and physical comprehension are both necessary to properly react, and raise healthy plants.

Physical Learning Experience:

- Large-scale worm raising and maintenance
- Vermicomposting production via casting harvesting and Worm Wine processing
- Organic gardening/small-scale agriculture
- Small-business management
- Local sustainability outreach

Reciting the intricacies that I have learned from a textbook will no longer suffice for the hands-on experience that I now crave - not only for organic crop production, but for all sustainable practices.

References

- Texas Worm Ranch. <http://www.txwormranch.com/index.html>. 1 August 2013.
- Waste Management. "Organic Waste Recycling". 1 August 2013. <http://www.wm.com/enterprise/food-and-retail/Restaurant-Solutions/organics-recycling.jsp>.

Acknowledgements

Heather Rinaldi, Organic Gardening Expert & Owner – Texas Worm Ranch
 Chad Julka, Horticulture Specialist – Texas Worm Ranch

Sponsors for high impact experiences for BESC and the BESC poster symposium include the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.