

## All about Maggots-Bursting myths

My compost bin in place, my garden smiling, I lounge on the sofa, dreaming....and I hear this shriek!! I am sure someone at home must have spotted an alien. With determined intentions of appearing in the front page of all the newspapers with our prized discovery, I gallop. My jaws drop and my heart sinks, oh! It's just a maggot in the bin!

What are maggots? A soft-bodied legless larva of a fly or other insect.



*A baby maggot!!*

Now why in my compost bin? When flies have had contact with your household wet waste, they may lay eggs which will then hatch out into maggots. These flies are lured by:

- Garbage
- Leftover food
- Animal dung
- Manure
- Moist rotting material

My family has always accepted fruit flies as a part of life. They would smash the ones they saw and then would try to prevent more from appearing, but when you've got a super indoor composter like **Eco Bin**, spotting maggots, however, are not acceptable. Not even remotely.

*My thesis and understanding:* Don't be grossed out when you sport maggots - they won't hurt you. In fact, these larvae play a role in breaking down and recycling nutrients back into the soil.



*A maggot in action, just before the hogging begins!*

The adult is a poor flyer, so is often found resting on walls or the leaves of plants. They have no functioning mouth parts, instead spending their adult lives in search of mates and reproducing (the reason the larvae are so beneficial to waste management is that they must obtain and store sufficient energy in the larval stage to carry them through their entire lifecycle). They are strictly outdoor flies that do not try to enter homes.

I just let the maggots thrive and discovered few things about them. They are voracious eater and have an amazing life cycle.

### **Voracious eaters!**

Over a period of 2 weeks, I noticed a few things about my new tenants: They ate like crazy. If you tossed it in, it vanished within hours. And the compost no longer stank; it now had the mild odor of damp straw. The maggots were very responsive; they pounced on new food and retreated from direct sunlight.

All kind of wet waste was all gobbled up so fast that the compost pile began to recede.

A little Internet surfing revealed: Our maggots were the larvae of black soldier flies (*Hermetia illucens*), often referred to as BSF, a native fly whose amazing environmental usefulness is just now being explored.

While BSF always lurk around any kind of compost pile, they probably didn't thrive due to several reasons. When kept warm and protected, the BSF larvae are probably nature's best composters.

The lack of adult flies was because of the BSF's solitary nature. Adult flies live less than a week and don't eat. The mature larvae crawl away from the compost pile to pupate, and the flies quickly mate, lay eggs and expire.

Our other compost-loving flies had vanished because the BSF eat so fast that other flies can't get established and they are prevented from breeding.

And unlike other flies, BSF are not attracted to human homes or food and do not spread disease.

## Cool life cycle

A maggot's life cycle begins with the egg stage, which on hatching leads to the larval stage. The larval stage or maggot stage comprises three sub-stages, wherein the larvae feeds voraciously, until it enters the pupal stage. Since maggots are intermediary stages in the life cycle of flies, their life span as maggots is only around 8-10 days, after which they molt into the pupal stage and turn into flies.

## How to prevent maggots

Here are few simple steps to help you avoid attracting flies to your Eco Bin and reduce your chances of getting maggots.

### In the Eco Bin

- Ensure to replace the bin lid tightly after each use. If it's broken or does not shut properly, dash a mail to [support@myecobin.in](mailto:support@myecobin.in) to arrange a free repair.
- Ensure to drain the Bokashi juice frequently from the bin.
- Start adding enough Magic Microbes mix.
- Avoid prolonged and direct exposure to sunlight and extreme temperatures.
- Rinse your bin before filling it again. Pay particular attention to the lip and underside of the bin where flies may land and lay their eggs.

### In the kitchen

- Try not to leave food waste uncovered, standing around in the open for too long. The smell will attract flies and they in turn will lay eggs on the food before it goes in the bin.
- Keep adding your food waste as and when it is generated. At the end of the day, ensure to generously sprinkle Magic Microbes.
- When not in use, wrapping the waste in newspaper will also help.
- Tie up any bags of rubbish tightly - it may help to double wrap rubbish if it is difficult to tie the bags up very tightly.

## How to get rid of maggots

- Don't panic. Although not desirable maggots should not cause you any harm.
- If it is only a small quantity of maggots and they are all inside the bin, you should wait for your bin to be emptied for stage II layering.
- After your bin has been emptied, clean it out with warm water.
- If you have a large number of maggots in or outside your bin, ?????shud we ask them to discard or just leave it?.

I would like to conclude this article by adding a twist to Tyler Durden's quote, "Listen up, maggots. You are special. You are as beautiful or unique as a snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else".