

Meal Plan: Seasonal Soil Health

SEASONAL SOIL HEALTH FOR VEGES AND ANNUALS

Winter

- Make compost for spring soil health
- Cover weeds with newspaper and mulch for a weed free winter
- Relax, let your soil take a break and recuperate from a busy year.

Spring

- Mix worm castings and compost into your soil to wake up the bacteria and micro-organisms for a busy spring
- Feed the leaves of new seedlings by spraying them with diluted liquid fish fertiliser for strong green leaves.

Summer

- Your soil is working hard in hot conditions, make sure you keep it well hydrated
- Water the soil around your plants with diluted liquid worm tea once a week for strong healthy roots.

Autumn

- Water the soil around your plants with diluted liquid seaweed fertiliser to feed your soil and give your plants essential micro-nutrients.
- You can do this in spring too!

TIP

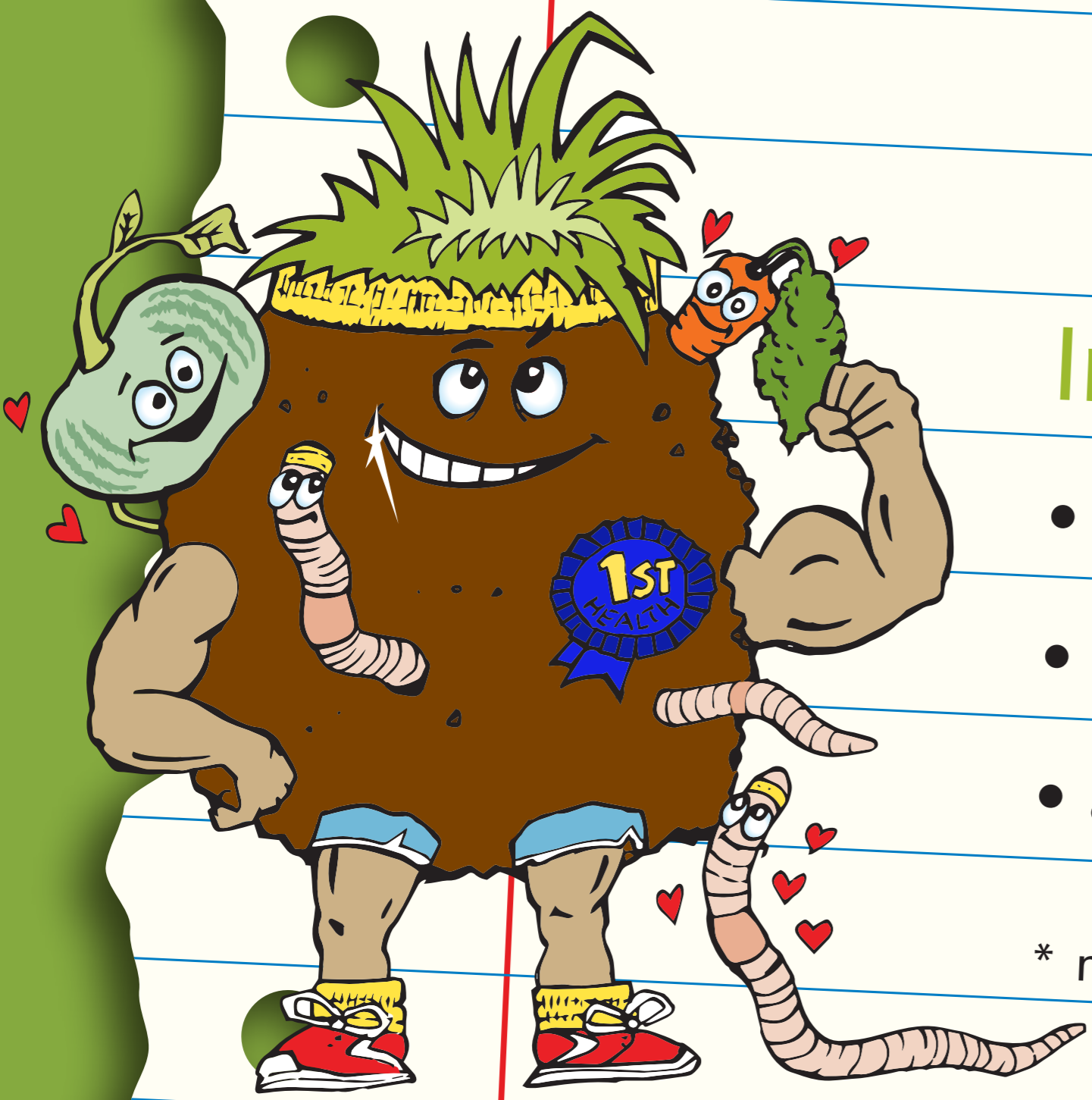
Buy liquid fish or seaweed fertiliser at your local garden centre
OR make your own - pick up a recipe from the gallery.



Manure Tea

Benefits

Used as a soil conditioner in vegetable gardens. It increases plant root absorption of minerals and enhances nutrient uptake.



Ingredients

- water
- cow and/or horse manure*
- a big barrel or drum with a tight fitting lid

* manure has to be dry and well aged - fresh manure will burn your plants

How to make it

- 1) Place barrel in a sunny spot outside
- 2) Put manure in barrel and cover with water (5 parts water : 1 part manure)
- 3) Cover with lid
- 4) Stir mixture every 3 days for 2 weeks.

How to use it

- Strain out remnants and spread around plant roots
- Dilute tea, 100ml tea : 1litre water
- Apply around the roots only - it will burn leaves, even after aging in tea
- Use 1-2 times per growing season.

CHEFS NOTE

Chicken manure can be used, however it needs to brew significantly longer than others as it is very high in nitrogen and will burn plants if not brewed correctly.





Compost Tea

Benefits

Compost tea makes the helpful bacteria and fungi found in regular compost more available to the soil.

Ingredients

- water
- compost
- a big barrel or drum with a tight fitting lid

How to make it

- 1) Place barrel in a sunny spot outside
- 2) Put compost in barrel and cover with water (5 parts water: 1 part compost)
- 3) Cover with lid
- 4) Stir mixture every 3 days for 2 weeks.

How to use it

- Strain out remnants and spread around plant roots
- Dilute tea, 100ml tea : 1litre water
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CHEFS NOTE

Compost tea simply turns the good stuff into liquid form.
The nutrient makeup in compost tea is great for soil.



Comfrey Tea

Benefits The comfrey plant has long and deep reaching tap roots. These roots gather nutrients buried deep in the ground - beyond the reach of most vegetables and other shallow rooting plants. The leaves store the nutrients, which are then extracted in the tea making process.

Ingredients

- comfrey leaves, as many as you can find
- old brown sack or onion bag
- a large bucket with a fitted lid (5L, 20L - any size, but must have a lid)
- water

How to make it

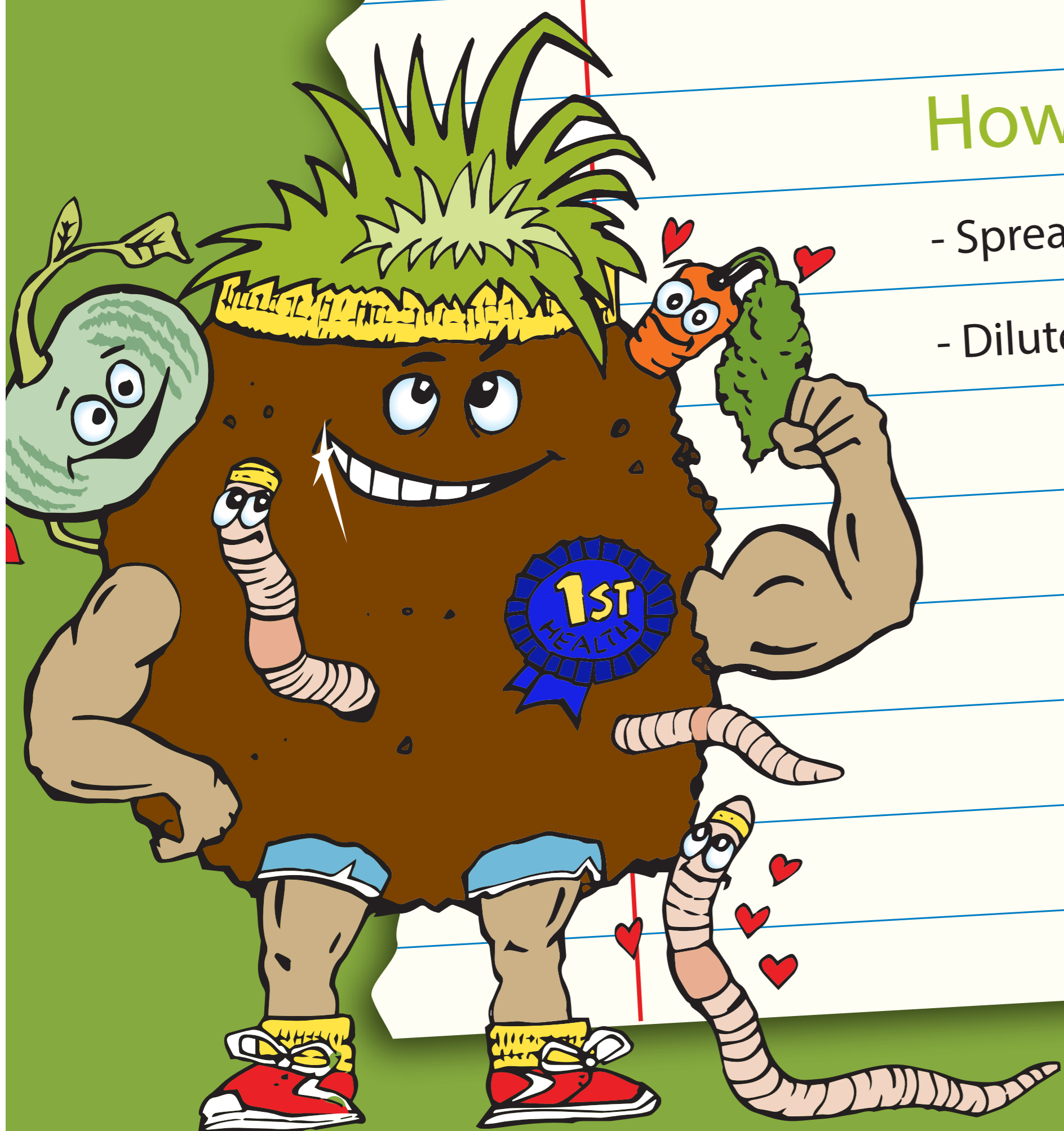
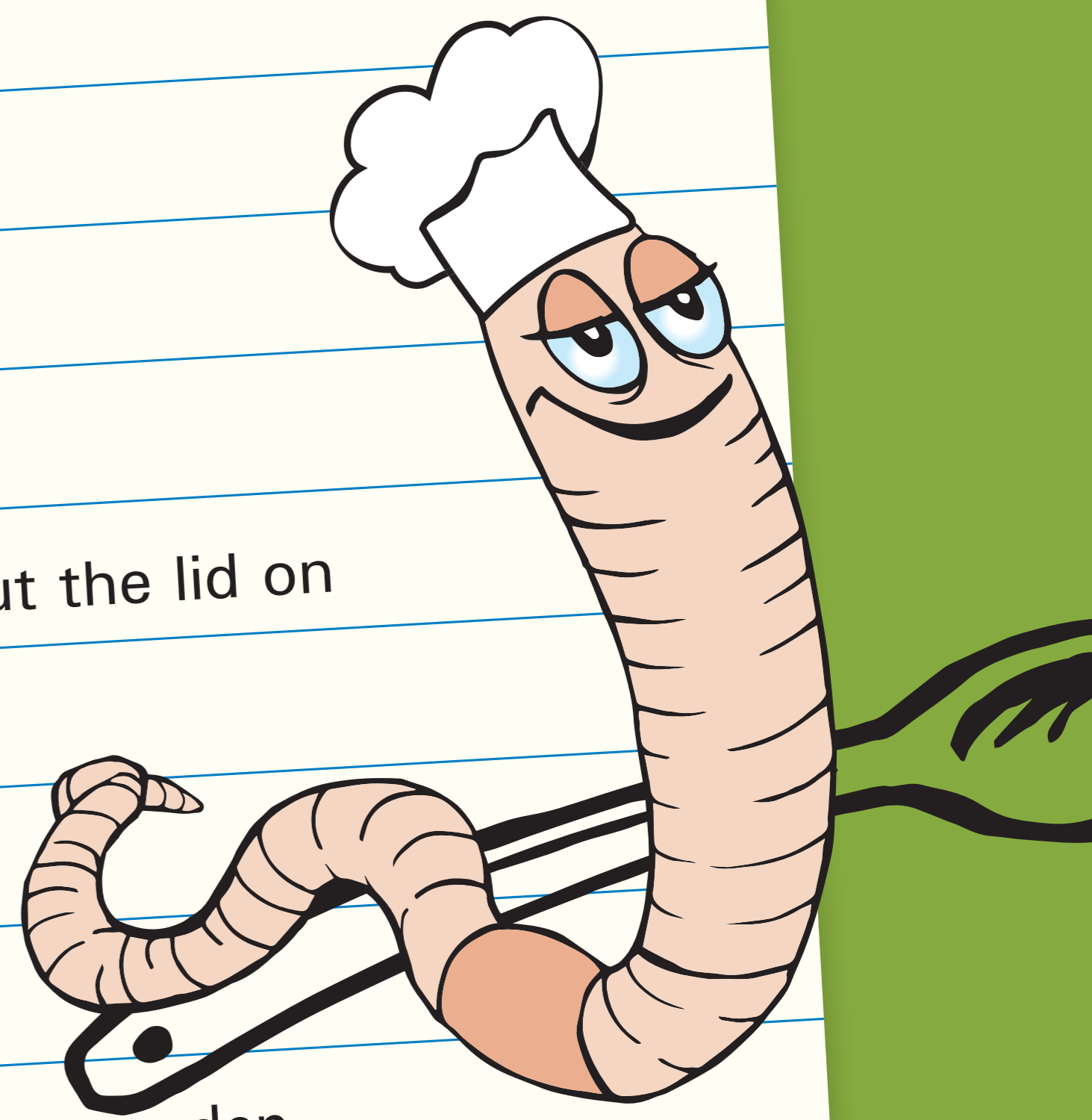
- 1) Cut comfrey down to its base at the ground
- 2) Stuff the sack full and tie it up tight
- 3) Pop into the bucket, cover bag with water, put the lid on
- 4) Allow to steep in a sunny spot for 3 weeks.

How to use it

- Spread the remaining leaves around your garden
- Dilute the tea 100ml tea : 1 litre water and feed everything.

CHEFS NOTE

Comfrey is best grown in a pot so that it doesn't invade your garden!



Weeds Tea

Benefits Recycle your weeds back into the garden! Make weeds tea to brew out the nutrients they have stolen from your soil.

Ingredients

- garden weeds, almost anything you can find
- large drum or rubbish bin with tight fitting lid
- vessel to hold weeds while brewing - an old pillowcase works great
- water

How to make it

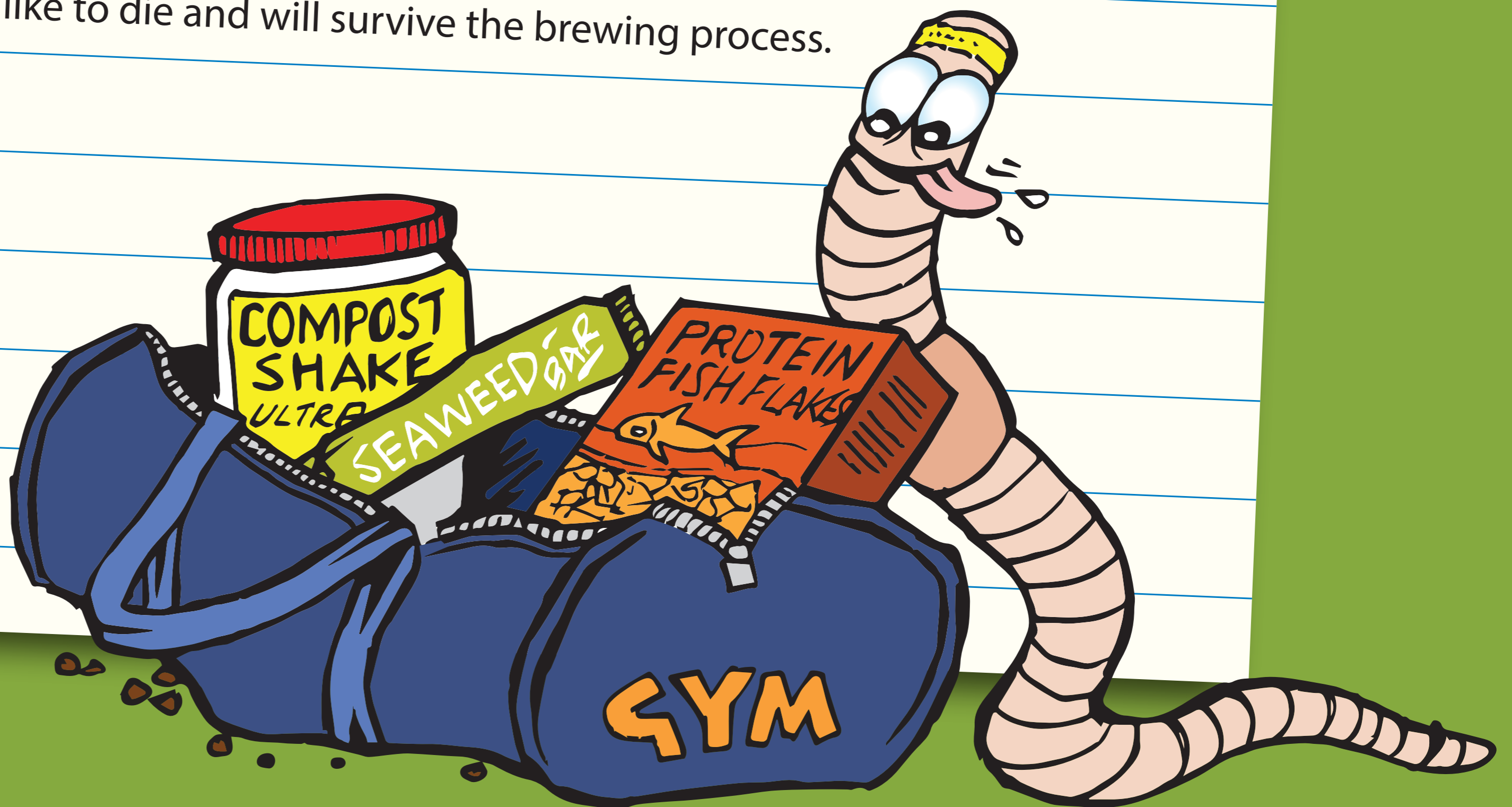
- 1) Stuff pillowcase full of weeds and tie tight
- 2) Place in barrel, cover with water and seal lid
- 3) Brew in a sunny spot for 8-10 weeks.

How to use it

- Remove pillowcase and squeeze out excess water, spread around the garden
- Give the tea a good stir and apply liquid to garden at 100ml tea : 1 litre water.

CHEFS NOTE

- Best to leave out noxious weeds like Oxalis and ragwort!
- These guys do not like to die and will survive the brewing process.



Cover Crops: Crimson Clover

Benefits Crimson clover is a multipurpose nitrogen fixing legume.
It also attracts beneficial insects.

Ingredients

- empty vege patch or garden bed that needs some TLC
- crimson clover seeds (*Trifolium incarnatum*)
- water
- sunny position

How to grow it

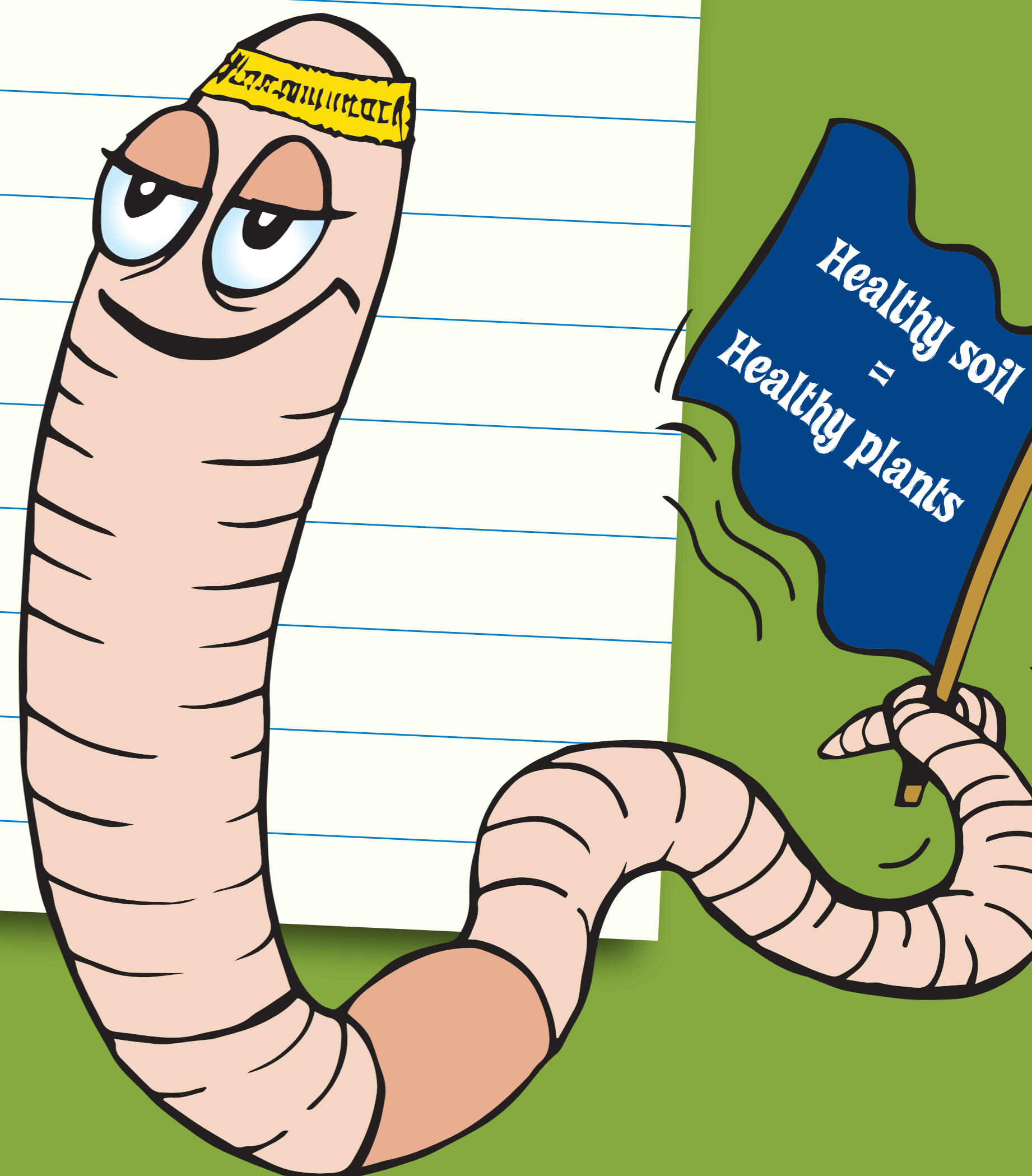
- 1) Sow in late summer for rapid bulky upright growth
- 2) Rake the bed then sprinke seed 2.5g per m2
- 3) Water.

How to use it

- Chop and dig in prior to flowering or leave for a valuable nectar-rich food supply for bees and beneficial insects.

CHEFS NOTE

- Cover freshly sown seed with dead fern bracts to prevent birds eating the seed
- Remove ferns once the seeds have germinated
- Crimson Clover goes dormant in the cold of winter before resuming growth up to 1m high in spring, and sporting a striking crimson bloom in early summer.



Cover Crops: Blue Lupin

Benefits

Excellent green manure for improving most soil types in most areas, with nitrogen fixing nodules on the roots.

Ingredients

- empty vege patch or garden bed that needs some TLC
- blue lupin seeds (*Lupinus angustifolius*)
- water
- sunny position

How to grow it

- 1) Sow anytime between spring and autumn
- 2) Rake then sprinkle seed evenly using your hands
- 3) Sow 5g per m²
- 3) Water and wait.

How to use it

- To add organic matter to your soil, chop the stems off just above the base.
- Leave the greens on the bed, then turn soil over the foliage.
- Leave for a few weeks before replanting.

CHEFS NOTE

- To increase germination rate, soak in warm water for a day.
- Cover freshly sown seed with dead fern bract to prevent birds eating the seed.
- Remove fern once the seeds have germinated.



Cover Crops: Mustard

Benefits Excellent for weed seed control as it quickly provides a dense cover. It also cleans up some harmful soil fungi.

Ingredients

- empty vege patch or garden bed that needs some TLC
- mustard seeds (*Brassica alba*)
- water
- sunny position

How to grow it

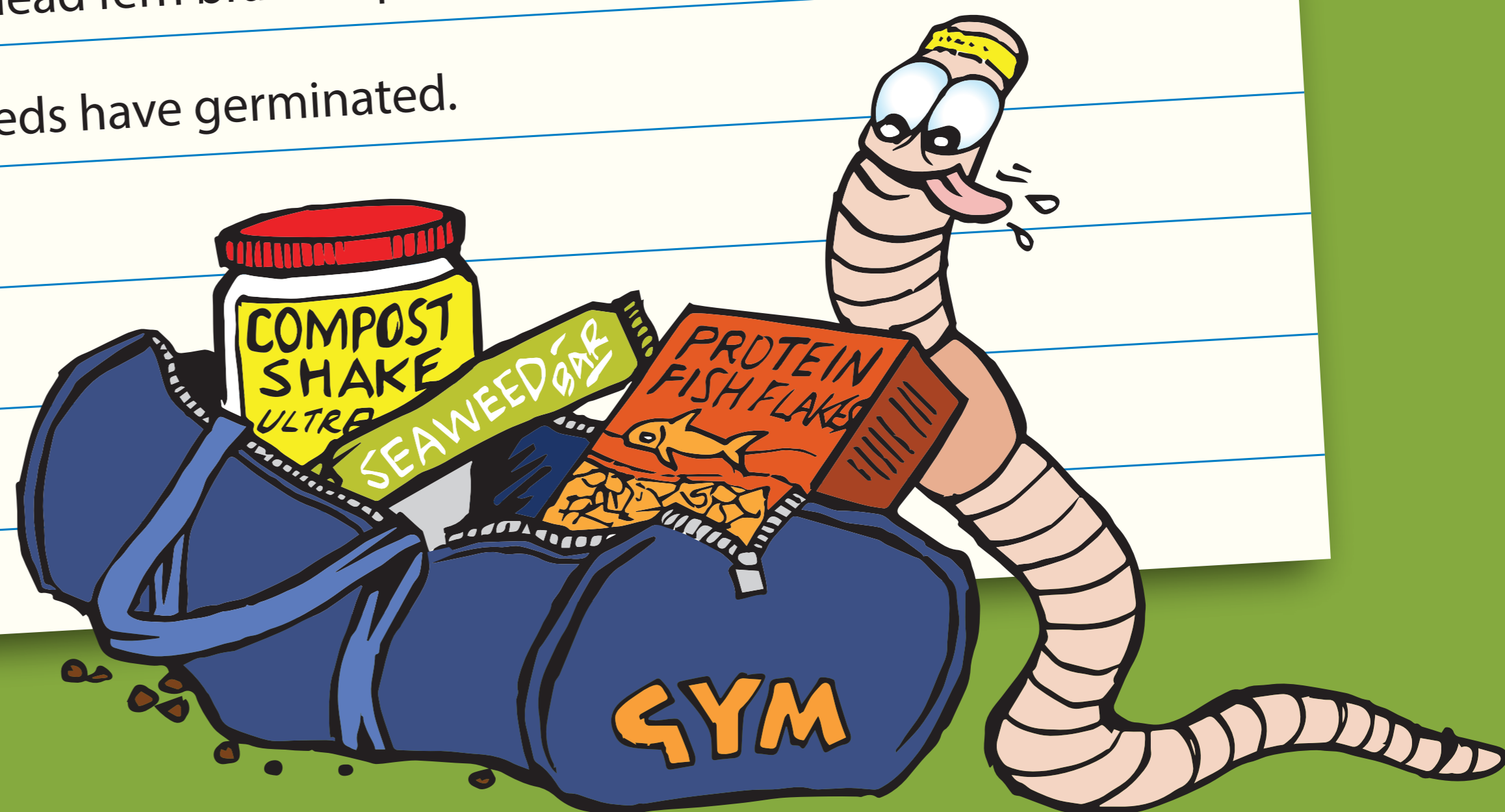
- 1) Sow anytime between spring and autumn
- 2) Rake then sprinkle seed evenly using your hands
- 3) Sow 3g per m²
- 4) Ensure the soil stays moist and doesn't dry out.

How to use it

- To add organic matter to your soil, chop the stems off just above the base.
- Leave the greens on the bed, then turn soil over the foliage.
- Dig or plough in after 4-6 weeks, and prior to flowering.

CHEFS NOTE

- Cover freshly sown seed with dead fern bract to prevent birds eating the seed.
- Remove the ferns once the seeds have germinated.



Cover Crops: Dwarf Broad Bean

Benefits

Fixes nitrogen on its roots, inhibits fusarium wilt and provides wonderful humus when dug in.

Ingredients

- an empty vege patch or garden that needs some TLC
- dwarf broad bean seeds (*Vicia faba*)
- water
- sunny position

How to grow it

- 1) Sow in the cooler months of autumn and spring
- 2) Rake soil surface so it's flat and even
- 3) Gently push beans into the soil to the depth of the first knuckle on your finger
- 4) Ensure beans are evenly spaced at a rate of 20g per m²
- 5) Water with fine spray of hose nozzle.

How to use it

- To add organic matter to your soil, chop the stems off just above the base.
- Leave the greens on the bed, then turn soil over the foliage.
- Leave for a few weeks before replanting.

CHEFS NOTE

- Cover freshly sown seed with dead fern bract to prevent birds eating the seed, remove the ferns once the seeds have germinated. The seeds are also susceptible to rodents, so ensure your seeds are well-covered by soil to make them hard for rodents to reach.
- Sow a few extra seeds to compensate for those that get eaten.

