

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #37:
Plant Mutants III



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

Although some might treat plants as a monotony of greenery and stalks, there is actually a great deal of variety within the kingdom. The previous two articles in the plant series discussed organisms derived from a more “normal” botany; this one takes a flying leap into the wa-hoo aspects. There are many weird and wonderful things you can do to play with this diversity, from alien plants, to new mutations, to an entirely new aspect: plant diseases. Enjoy, and try not to chuckle too loudly when you spring these on your players for the first time.

Bonevine

No. Enc.:	0 (1)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	0'
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	30
Attacks:	8 (vines)
Damage:	2d6 each
Save:	L21
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	XII, XIV

Even though each can reach 500' in diameter and weigh over 10 tons, these enormous plants are almost completely unseen. Bonevines are, for the most part, masses of roots that can reach depths of 1,000'. This structure keeps a plant safe from sandstorms and other violent weather, but in order to photosynthesize, clusters of ropey vines sprout randomly across its diameter. Each vine is 4'-12' long with a few lancet leaves and entirely green to maximize chlorophyll exposure. Despite the tremendous sun in their desert homes, the plants cannot support themselves this way and must feed on other organisms, whether plants, animals, or something else.

Because of this constant deficiency the plant is always starving. When something edible comes within range of the vines, the bonevine reacts to the movement and attacks, even



if it has fed recently. Eight of its vines are larger and have small spines that drip poison. Anything struck by these vines must save versus poison or gain the *slow mutant* drawback for 1d4 hours. Victims are drawn into the sand and either immediately consumed by the plant's root tendrils or used as fertilizer for its seeds.

Their deep roots make bonevines tough to kill, but are also the reason desert dwellers hunt them: the roots are a huge water store. If dug up and drained, the roots from a single plant can provide enough water to sustain 100 people for a month. Unfortunately, when the plant is killed, its roots burst, turning the surrounding area into quicksand. When this happens, anyone over the roots has one round to escape, or get stuck and probably drown. To avoid both the danger and losing the water, hunters usually first paralyze the plant with a mutation, artifact, or poison.

Mutations: *induce mutation, natural armor, natural vegetal weapon, unconscious reaction.*

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the “Basic” system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).



Demon's Walking Stick

No. Enc.:	0 (1)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	0'
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	12
Attacks:	1 or 1 (radiation or colors)
Damage:	Class 6 radiation or special
Save:	L6
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	VII

This unique alien plant perches on a mountainside just below cloud cover, where it draws lightning to power its abilities. It is 16' tall and 4' in diameter, with a fibrous, almost liquid appearing exterior and a few 4'-6' long branches tipped with hand-shaped red-green leaves.

Because of its alien nature, the Walking Stick is highly toxic to native life. Creatures biting the plant must save versus death or suffer 3d4 points of damage per round for 1d8 rounds.

It is not intelligent and cannot communicate, but after being struck by lightning, the plant glows with strange colors and patterns for 1d6 weeks. This aura is a side effect of the local atmospheric gases (neon and others) the plant absorbs and has turned into a defensive weapon. All within 30' who see this display are rendered speechless and can only escape if they save versus stun. The save must be made every turn until the victim is out of range. Those who are stunned remain so until something blinds them or the display ends. Lightning also powers the plant's ability to fire bolts of radiation out to 150', which it does at anything that moves.

Mutations: *dazzling display (new)*, *natural armor (plant)*, *radioactive emissions*, *xenochemistry (plant)(new)*.

Dizzy Weed

No. Enc.:	0 (1)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	0'
Armor Class:	8 (leaves), 2 (roots)
Hit Dice:	5 (leaves), 15+ (roots)
Attacks:	1 (bite)
Damage:	1d8
Save:	L3
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	VI

Hidden in a crevasse full of ice and snow, deep in the arctic, lies the dizzy weed. At 1'-2' tall, with the longest branches 15'-20' long, the plant is not very threatening, appearing almost like bonsai gone wild. But, the plant lacks a common name — because most who encounter it die, lost to its bite and three terrifying toxic weapons.

Each gas can be used at will, does not need to be recharged, and creates a cloud with a 25' radius. The first causes victims to lose their sense of direction — even with obvious landmarks or a visible sun. It is a subtle toxin, but powerful, with a -8 penalty to a save versus poison. Those who fail will wander randomly for 1d4 days, unless they die of cold or dehydration, or can get the poison purged by certain artifacts or mutations.

A more direct defense, the second gas is highly flammable: a cloud explodes with any spark or open flame. Anyone caught within the explosion takes 2d6 points of damage (with a save versus energy for half damage), and must save versus stun to avoid being concussed for 1d6 rounds. Anyone in the explosion, or within 50' looking it, must save versus energy or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. The plant's leaves are incinerated, but its roots benefit from a variant of *light to mass*. They grow fast and strong, which makes it hard to kill the plant with physical attacks.

The third gas is released at night and glows in the dark to draw prey, usually some of the large insects adapted to the cold or protected from it by the *reflective epidermis* mutation.



The plant uses the bugs for their mineral and protein content, lacking in the poor soil. Some creatures, such as blind insects or worms, can eat dizzy weed, but most avoid it or die.

Mutations: *carnivore, light to mass, luminous gas, toxic weapon, special.*

Red Sac

No. Enc.: 0 (1d8)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 0'
 Armor Class: 8
 Hit Dice: 6
 Attacks: 1 (poison gas)
 Damage: Special
 Save: L3
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: XII

Also known as boneweed, these 10' tall, 20' diameter mutant Venus fly traps are found in frequently flooded, boggy areas with loose soil. Unlike their predecessors, the feeding leaves (the traps) on these plants have fused shut and now act as poison gas glands. A typical red sac has six gland leaves, but some can have up to nine. The plant can make enough poison for six releases per leaf per day.

When prey nears, the plant sprays gas in a 20' diameter cloud that lasts for 1d4+1 rounds. All in the target area must save versus poison or be paralyzed for 4d6 rounds. Those who fail are crushed to death by the plant's other modified leaves. The tendrils can reach a 10' radius around the plant and constriction takes 1d4 rounds to build. Victims out of this range or those immediately pulled free of the killing leaves suffer no damage, but those without help nearby automatically die.

As an unusual byproduct of the poison production, the trap leaves create and drop chunks of limestone through holes in their undersides. These lengths of calcium carbonate give the plant its secondary name; they look and smell very much like bones from a fresh kill, stained red and brown as though covered with blood. They also draw scavengers the plant feeds on. Some mutants in rock-starved areas have developed relatively safe methods for harvesting the limestone, using it in mortar and formulae, among other things.

Mutations: *abnormal size, constricting tendrils, toxic weapon, special.*

Sky Juniper

No. Enc.: 1 (0)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 1/4 current wind speed
 Armor Class: 4
 Hit Dice: 16
 Attacks: 3 (roots)
 Damage: 1d12/1d12/1d12
 Save: L8
 Morale: 9
 Hoard Class: Special



These massive white junipers are creeping plants no longer, having mutated and broken the surly bonds of earth: they can synthesize a lighter-than-air compound from the air itself. The plants use this material, similar to an aerogel mixed with pumice, to create stoney shells 20'-50' in diameter that protect the roots and branches within.

The junipers may resemble dirigibles, but the shell provides lift not a contained gas within it, so having "portholes" for sunlight, leaves, and their 10' long defensive roots does not affect flight. The roots are not long enough to reach all parts of the shell, so smaller creatures (insects and birds, even flying sharks and sheep) tend to colonize it and provide the plant with additional defenses.

Although they maintain a relatively constant cruising altitude of 500'-750', sky junipers cannot control where they travel, so many die after being blown over deserts or into the cold regions of the world. Every few years in their wanderings, the junipers break off buds that falls to the ground and will start to create their own shells. Occasionally, enterprising folk have taken to using the fully grown junipers as a form of travel. Some have even found ways to dominate the plant and add engines to the shells.

Mutations: *alter atomic composition, aberrant form (xenomorphism), flight, natural armor (plants), natural vegetal weapon.*

Snow Cyclops

No. Enc.: 1d6 (1d6)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 180' (60')
 Armor Class: 7
 Hit Dice: 12
 Attacks: 1 (slam)
 Damage: 1d10+5
 Save: L6
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: VI, XII



Snow cyclops are 20' tall cherry trees active only during the cold months. They grow throughout temperate regions with extended winters, e.g., along the former Canadian-U.S. border. Until the saplings reach maturity at 5 to 8 years, they are immobile and cannot defend themselves. The adult trees, however, have segmented trunks, which allow them to whip their upper branches at targets within 10'.

The cyclops get their name from a large vegetable eye located at the top of the trunk. While it does allow the trees to spot intruders, the single eye suffers from a lack of depth perception, giving each plant a -2 penalty to hit. The eye is also filled with a hallucinogen some tribes use to receive visions. It can only be removed from a dead cyclops, but each is worth as much as 1,000 gp to these people. The cherries can be harvested, and some consider them a delicacy, but picking them is too dangerous for most people.

Mutations: *arthropod deformity, free movement, full senses, valuable, vision impairment.*

NEW PLANT DISEASES

Since the beginning, plants have missed out on one of the more charming hazards in the wastes: diseases. But now weeping sores and oozing orifices aren't just for humans any more. Like other life forms, greenery can be infested with bacteria, viruses, and fungi (like rusts, molds, and slimes), or various insect pests. Some examples are below, but Mutant Lords are encouraged to let their inner plague generator run free.

Bullseye Bark

Save Modifier: +1
Infection Duration: 4 weeks
Affected Stats: -2 CON
Damage per day: 1d4

Mutant bacteria infesting the plant's inner bark cause this unusual disease. One week after contracting it, the victim starts giving off bio-luminescent pulses of red, blue, and

green. While the plant glows it cannot sneak and suffers a +4 AC penalty. On a clear night, without obstructions, the aura can be seen from a mile away. As the disease progresses, the pattern changes but the penalty remains the same. Once a plant has survived a bout with bullseye bark, it is immune thereafter.

Symptoms: Glowing bark, limp leaves, and painful branches.

Flaming Needle

Save Modifier: -4
Infection Duration: 1 day
Affected Stats: -4 STR, -4 CON, -4 DEX
Damage per day: 3d4

Conifers and cacti that contract flaming needle do not survive very long. The infesting bacteria increase the temperature of their victim until it ignites. This kills most of the bacteria but the survivors can spread on floating ashes and infect nearby plants.

Symptoms: Blackened, smoldering, or flaming needles.

Red Spot

Save Modifier: -1
Infection Duration: 1 week
Affected Stats: -2 CON, -2 DEX
Damage per day: 1d3

Spread by insect vectors and infected sap contaminating open wounds, this bacterial disease attacks broad-leaved plants such as poison ivy, maples, and palms. Over several agonizing weeks or months, the disease breaks down the cellular components for photosynthesis. The plant slowly starves to death and "saps out" as the leaves break and weep (i.e. release sap instead of sending it to the roots). Although ripping off all the plant's leaves might seem an effective treatment, it does no good because the disease lives in the stems as well.

Symptoms: Red spotting on leaves, which begin weeping after a month.

Twitch

Save Modifier: -3
Infection Duration: 1 week
Affected Stats: -4 DEX, -2 CON, -2 STR
Damage per day: 1d6

One of plant-kind's most feared diseases, the twitch only affects plants that can move on their own. Infesting mites release a toxin into the plant, triggering constant mild seizures. The movement prevents a victim from sleeping, interferes with its speaking, and cuts the plant's movement rate by 50%. In regions where the twitch is common, plants try to keep insecticides on hand to rid themselves of the mites. Victims with advanced cases of the twitch can tear themselves apart by the end, not a pretty sight for other intelligent plants.

Symptoms: Constant twitches in the roots, branches and twigs.

NEW MUTATIONS

Alter Atomic Composition

The mutant can change one material to another, both randomly selected at character creation. Only (1d4xWillpower) pounds can be affected per day. If the result is undesirable, then this mutation is considered a drawback. Roll twice on the following chart:

Roll	Material
1	Soft metal
2	Hard metal
3	Rubber
4	Plastic
5	Stone
6	Wood
7	Ceramic (including glass)
8	Flesh (mindless)
9	ML's pick
10	Player's pick

Arthropod Deformity

With this mutation, the plant's body is segmented like an insect or centipede, doubling its movement rate. A variant for NPCs/plant monsters allows each segment to *possibly* have a different set of mutations. The ML should describe the plant in detail and determine the kinds of branches, vines, and/or roots that might affect such parts by adding 1d4 mutations.

Dazzling Display

The mutant plant has cells within its bark and leaves, similar to those in squid or jellyfish, that glow constantly and make complex color changes. This can be used to communicate, but it is mostly a visual version of *fragrance development (plants)*.

Induce Mutation

The mutant can cause a mutation or drawback to manifest in others. The range is touch, the duration is one day, and the mutation is rolled or selected at the time of the mutant's creation.

Light to Mass

The mutant can convert light energy into matter of some sort. For every 16 hours of bright light, the mutant can create 1 pound of material, the particular type determined at creation.

Roll	Material
1	Wood
2	Bone or Dead Flesh
3	Metal (75% soft /25% hard)
4	Stone
5	Plastic
6	Ceramic
7	ML's pick
8	Player's pick



Luminous Gas

The mutant can produce a cloud of glowing gas in a 15' radius around himself. The cloud completely conceals anyone inside it, and provides a -2 AC bonus for those within 5' of it. This is a full round action and may be used at will. The cloud dissipates 3 rounds after the mutant stops generating it.

Unconscious Reaction (D)

Every time the mutant is exposed to a specific stimulus, he must perform a specific action. The behavior lasts until the stimulus goes away or the mutant falls asleep. There is no save and the mutant may not even realize the behavior is odd. Shark frenzy, in fictional accounts, is a good example of this. The player and Mutant Lord determine the specifics when this drawback is gained.

Xenochemistry

The plant's chemical make up is alien to the biosphere. Herbivores and omnivores treat the plant as either inedible or poisonous. The former means anything eating the mutant takes 6d8 points of damage over 16 hours, while the latter is equivalent to the *toxic weapon* mutation. The plant is also toxic to its pollinators unless they have the *aberrant form (xenochemistry)* mutation and the same chemistry. Because of this, plant species with this mutation usually die out after one generation.

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