

## HOW TO GROW A FOREST

## PHOTOSYNTHESIS

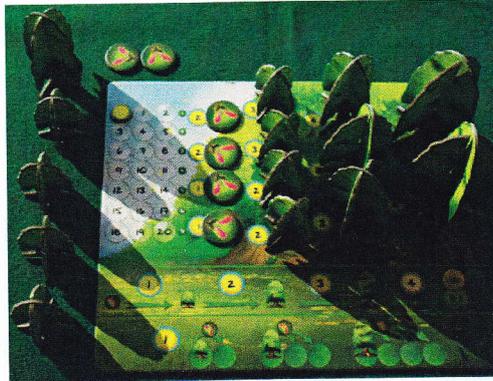
WOW! THE WOOD, THE TREES... WHAT A WONDERFUL TRIP!

The "artistic" touch of this game is the first thing that catch your eyes: a magnificent paint is printed on the box cover, and when you open it you find that most of the components are carton tiles to be assembled in order to form 56 small trees (in four different species and three different heights) for a truly 3D effect.

The box also includes four personal boards (that I will call "plant nursery" from now) with all the important indications to play the game, 24 round tokens (called "Seeds"), 24 bigger tokens (that show the Victory Points (VP) to assign during the game), a general board on which are printed 36 circles in 4 concentric rings and a "sun rays mobile section" (we will explain its use later).

Each player's set contain eight small, four medium and two tall trees, plus six seeds: most of those pieces should be placed on the plant nursery but two seeds, four small and one medium trees remain available for

immediate use. We recognize a set each of "Oaks" (colored in yellow), "Firs" (blue), "Limes" (green) and "Maples" (orange).



The set up of Photosynthesis is very quick: each player places four seeds, four small, three medium and two tall trees on his plant nursery and the "Light Points" token on the case "0" of the related track. Then each play-

er places two of his small trees on the external ring of the boards (18 circles with a tan color and just "one" printed leaf).

The VP tokens are divided in four different piles: one for nine "one leaf" tokens (that will assign between 14 and 12 VP), one for seven "two leaves" tokens (17-13 VP), one for five "three leaves" (19-16 VP) and finally one for three "four leaves" (22-20 VP).

Around the board is printed a thin hexagonal "green line" to be used for the yellow mobile section: at the beginning of each turn this section moves on the following vertex and the sun rays will spread their light over the forest. Each game lasts 18 turns; therefore, the sun section will make three complete rounds of the board.

The purpose of the game is to plant new trees inside the forest, grow them and when they are tall enough ... well it is up to you to decide: ecologists will say that they die because they are too old, while IKEA wood traders will say that they are cut and sold. Whichever the selected solution the result is the same: for each "big" tree (dead or cut) the player receives the top most VP



token from the stack with the same number of leaves. If, for example, you are the first to cut a big tree grown in the central circle (four leaves) you get the 22 VP token, while the second will receive 21 VP etc.

On his turn a player may: (a) plant a new seed; (b) grow one tree; (c) purchase new seeds or new trees from his plant nursery or (d) cut a big tree. The cost of every operation is printed on the personal board and is paid with Sun Light Point (SLP). At the beginning of each turn the Sun Section is moved on the following vertex of the forest and the players verify which trees are touched by the sun light: the small trees give one SLP, the medium two SLP and the big ones three SLP. But attention: the trees in the shadow will not gain sun points, therefore a careful check must be done, considering that a small tree projects its shadow only on the hex behind him, a medium on two hexes and a big one over three hexes. Of course, if a bigger tree is in the shadow of a smaller one the sun may reach it and therefore it always gains his SLP. Look at Picture 3 for an example of the above.

One of the basic rules of the game specifies that each "circle" (case) may support only one operation: if you plant a seed in a case you cannot grow a tree in the same turn and in the same case, even if you have enough SLP, if you use a tree to seed you cannot cut it or grow it; if you have just grown a tree you cannot use it to seed, etc. Sometimes the players forget this important rule in the first game or two, but this is a mistake that may change the final result.

Another basic rule says that each "object" taken from the board (a seed transformed in a tree, a tree transformed in a bigger one, etc.) must be placed again in the plant nursery: if there is no space it is eliminated forever: therefore, when you plan to transform a seed in a small tree it is better to purchase first a new seed from the plant nursery and put the tree on the board AFTER this purchase, so the old seed will find a place on the personal board.

At the beginning of the game, with just two small threes on the board, the players

is no free place on the plant nursery at the beginning of the game.

Seeds "fall" from the trees that are already on the forest and may be placed at a distance of 1-2-3 circles from the "father", depending on its height (small, medium, big). All the necessary information is printed on the personal board and after a few turns the players do not need to go back to the rules for a clarification: everything will be clear and easy to understand. The cost to purchase a new tree, for example, is printed on the left side of its case and varies depending on the number of plants still remaining on the personal board. The cost to grow or cut a tree is printed in a row just below the trees while the last row shows the allowed distance to plant new seeds.

When a tree reaches its maximum height, we have to decide if it is better to cut it and get the highest VP token, or to wait until we will have also a second, high tree in order to gain more SLP. But if you already have two tall trees it is time to cut at least one of them. The VP tokens have different values:



As you see all the small trees on the foreground project their shadows on empty circles, therefore they do not penalize anyone. The medium yellow tree behind (the one on the "two leaves" circle) projects its shadow on the orange and blue and they will not get any SLP. And so on.

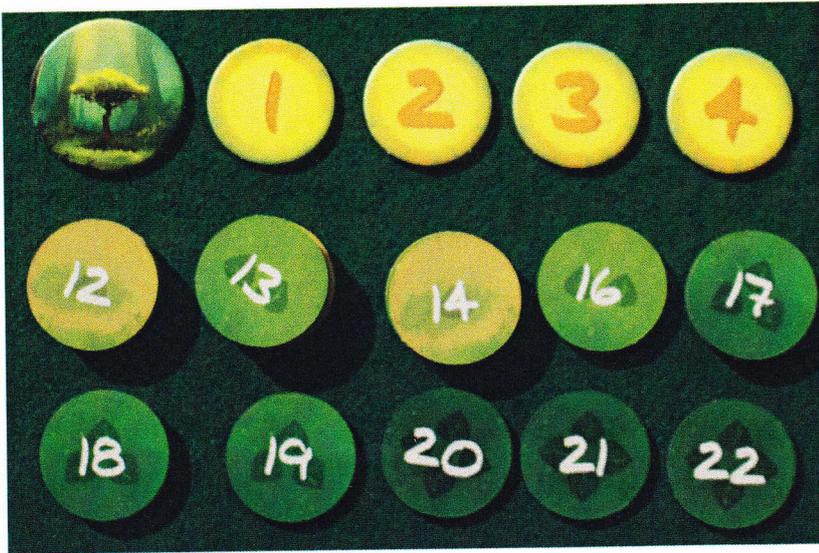
will receive only 2 SLP, so one of the actions could be to plant a seed (1 SLP) and to buy a new seed from the plant nursery, in order to transform a seed in a tree in the next turn. But if you wish to transform a small tree in a medium one (2 SLP) you know that the small tree will be discarded because there

those with just one leaf have the lowest one (14-14-13-13-13-12-12-12-12) but the points raise to the maximum of 20-21-22 for the 3 tokens with 4 leaves. Remember: the first player to cut gets the highest value token but lose a "generator" of SLP so look carefully at your trees and if you see that

one of them falls in the shadow of another tree ... well, this is the best moment to cut it.

one (losing forever the small) because in the following turn I can get 3 SLP to purchase one new seed (1 SLP) to be planted in

the number of turns before the end of the game: thus, you may plan your growth in tie to cut a big tree and make points in the last turn. This seems a very "simple" suggestion but I can assure you that in every game I played some players were upset as they were unable to cut one of their trees.



After 18 turns the players total the number of VP gained during the game and the highest value wins. Sometimes it happens that two players have the same total: in that eventuality the winner is the player with most cases with his trees and seeds on the board.

Photosynthesis can be played in TWO (a very tactical game, but I suggest using the advanced rules) or in FOUR (more strategic), but my favorite is the THREE players game. Whichever the number the game is always very tight.

At the beginning of the game it is suggested to plant new seeds in the "two leaves" cases in order to grow a small tree there, thereafter seed the "three leaves" cases, etc. The first to reach with a seed the unique Four-leaves case in the center of the board will have the opportunity to keep it until the last turn of the game, if he wishes, as his opponents will not be able to plant here and get the related VP tokens. Therefore, they will be obliged to grow and cut more trees and get VP from Two- and Three-leaves cases.

But one of my favorite "openings" is to use the initial two SLP to transform a small tree in a medium

a 3 leaves case (1 SLP) while a second seed is planted in a 2 leaves case (1 SLP). Occupying with a seed the best cases is always a good strategy, even if some of them will never grow: those cases are denied to your opponents.

In the advanced game you cannot plant or grow trees in the shadowed cases: I suggest using this rule only with expert players because the game becomes really very competitive. With this rule conquering the central case (4 leaves) becomes less important as it will be shadowed all the time by the opponents: the "2 leaves" cases will become the most used ones as they may receive the sun rays most of the time.

A second advanced rule allows for 6 extra turns (for a total of 24) and we suggest using it in the first games between new gamers: you add 10 minutes of playing time, but you reduce a little the competitive side. It is in effect very important to keep an eye on



#### Pietro Cremona

*One of the best abstract games that I played in the last few years. The visual of the table after the set-up is also very very nice. And probably this kind of "green" games may suggest treating Mother Nature a little better.*

Like many other abstract games, it is better to play Photosynthesis with players having more or less the same experience: the children (I tested the game with boys and girls 7 to 11 years old) will be delighted to plant and grow their trees and they will not pay much attention to the strategies, Expert players will play much more carefully and they will study every new "move" not only to gain more SLP in the next turn, but also (and mostly) to reduce the opponents' opportunities at the same time with their shadows. ☑

Pietro Cremona

#### INFORMATION

Designer: Hjalmar Hach

Artist: Sabrina Miramon

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Publisher: Blue Orange Games 2017

[www.blueorangegames.eu](http://www.blueorangegames.eu)

PLAYERS:

2-4

AGE:

8+

TIME:

40+

#### BEWERTUNG

Abstract, case occupation

Users: With friends

Version: multi

Rules: de en es fr it nl pt ru cn kr pl

in-game text: no

Comments:

Planning ahead is necessary \* Short playing

time \* Good interaction among players \*

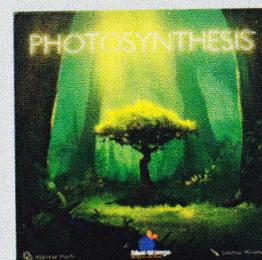
Good rules

Compares to:

Abstract placement games

Other editions:

Blue Orange (en), Broadway Toys (cn), Happy Baobab (kr), Mandala Jogos (pt), Portal Games (pt)



My rating:

