

The Icehouse Plant Game

Author: Ross Andrews (randrews@geekfu.org)

Players: 3-4

Overview:

The players each control a plant. The plants are trees or chains of Icehouse pieces, which grow toward the sun, trying to block the other plants.

Materials:

- One stash per player
- One object (a small Icehouse piece is ideal, but anything will do) to represent the sun.
- One length of string, for floss calls
- Some counters; pennies, glass beads, what have you. About ten per player should be fine.
- Some totem to determine who goes first (a large Icehouse piece will be perfect)

Setup:

- Place the sun object in the center of the table.
- Each player puts a large Icehouse piece 5 inches away from the sun, pointing at it. This is the root of your plant. The roots should be roughly evenly spaced around the sun.
- Give the go-first totem to the player who has the dumbest haircut. They deserve some pity.

Goal:

To get the most, largest pieces on the board.

Gameplay:

This game is played in rounds. Each round has the following structure:

- Each player receives energy (represented by counters) from their roots and leaves, and blocked leaves die.
- The players take turns growing their plants, until all players are out of energy or pass
- The go-first totem is passed to the left

When a player passes, they can make no more actions for the rest of the round. They keep whatever energy they have left, saving it for next round.

Receiving Energy:

Icehouse pieces that have no pieces growing from them are called "leaves". Leaves are how your plant grows and gets energy; they are very important. At the beginning of a round, each partially blocked leaf gets one point of energy, each completely unblocked leaf gets two points, and each completely blocked leaf gets no points and dies.

A leaf is partially blocked if it is possible to draw a line from the center of the sun to some point on the leaf, without intersecting another piece. Intersecting pieces can be of your own color; you can block yourself.

A leaf is completely unblocked if it is NOT possible to draw a line from the center of the sun to the leaf that DOES intersect another piece.

A leaf is completely blocked if it is not possible to draw a line from the center of the sun to the leaf without intersecting another piece.

A leaf that dies is removed from the board and the game; it may not be placed again. A player's root piece may never be killed. Pieces that aren't leaves can't be killed until all pieces growing off of them are killed (and they become leaves).

The root produces three energy if nothing grows off it.

Easy way to remember this: you get one energy if you can draw an unbroken line. You get two energy if you *can't* draw a broken line.

Growing the Plant:

You spend points of energy to grow your plant by placing another piece on the board. Pieces must be placed such that their points touch the base of another piece of your color. The root is an exception to this; pieces grown off the root touch the tip of the root. It is possible for a piece to have more than one piece growing from it.

Placing a piece costs points according to the size of the piece; smalls cost 1, mediums are 2 and larges 3.

A piece must be placed such that it sees at least some sun; no piece may be played that will immediately die. However, no part of a piece may be closer than the length of a lying-down large piece to the sun.

Ending the game:

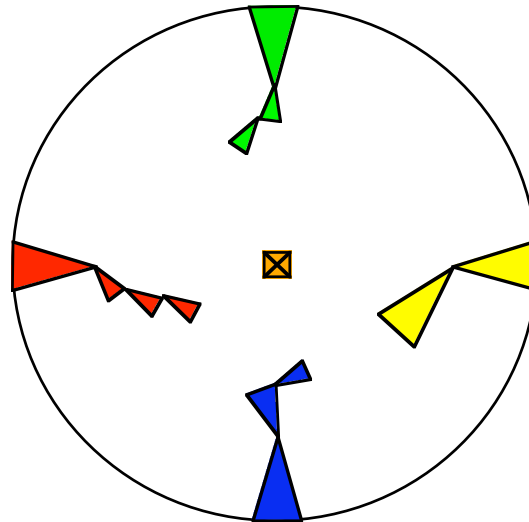
When no player has pieces in their stash that can be played (without immediately dying) then the game ends. The board is scored one last time (for leaves, if necessary, to die) and then the player with the most points in play wins (larges are worth three, mediums two, etc.). In case of a tie, the tying player with the most energy left wins. In case of a tie in energy, the tying player with the most energy made this turn wins.

Example rounds:

Round 1:

All players are getting energy from their roots, so each player starts with three.

Blue has the ugliest haircut, so he goes first. He places a medium off his root for two points. Red then follows with a small leaning toward blue for one point, green with a small going straight toward the sun, and yellow drops down a large for all three points. Blue's next turn is placing a small off the medium going toward yellow, to later block his large. This costs blue one more energy, so now both he and yellow are done for the round. Red plays another small, and green does the same. With yellow and blue both done it's now red's turn again, for a third small off the second, and green chooses to pass (to save an energy point for the next round).



Round 2:

All players have one leaf that is completely unblocked, so each player receives two energy. Green has one saved from last round so he has three. Red goes first, as the go-first totem was passed to him from blue.

Red places a small for a point, and green places a medium for two points. Yellow, fearing being blocked, places a small off his large to force blue to grow around it; accordingly, blue's next small is angled up somewhat to engulf yellow's branch. Red places a second small (finishing his round) next to the first one, so he now has two leaves producing. Green passes to save another point, and yellow places another small off the root. Blue's next placement is a small, to block yellow's small leaf. It will die next round.

