

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Forest for the Trees

Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar
 House of Cards
 Thursday, October 24, 2002



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Recently a fellow named Sean wrote to me asking which **Magic** color is my favorite. I told him that green is very clearly my favorite (the other four colors pretty much tie for second) because of its emphasis on big creatures and stable mana. Indeed, my two most successful decks in tournament play were monogreen control decks.

In particular, I have an odd fascination with green decks that put a lot of land onto the table. You read that correctly: It is possible, largely thanks to green, to not only generate mana, but to generate *land*. Land decks are a peculiar type of deck, but I have yet to see a land deck that didn't make me smile.

So today, in a week dedicated to my favorite color, I turn to monogreen land decks that throw a bazillion forests onto the table. These deck ideas will only skim the surface of possibilities with land decks, but I hope they give you ideas on how to both produce and use a ton of land.



A FOREST OF FORESTS

First of all, you may be skeptical that land decks actually qualify as a deck archetype. Yet if you look at almost every **Magic** expansion, you will find cards that allow your land base to explode. Cards like **Rampant Growth**, **Clear the Land**, **Diligent Farmhand**, **Explosive Vegetation**, and **Harrow** are meant to accelerate your mana development while thinning land from your deck so that later in the game you are drawing "business" spells instead of land. As an added bonus, these cards tend to allow you to diversify your mana and add different color spells to your deck. Land decks use a good complement of these land-thinning cards as their foundations.

As it's Green Week, let's focus on the cards that specifically pull forests onto the table. **Nature's Lore**, **Wood Elves**, **Silverglade Elemental**, and, my personal favorite, **Skyshroud Claim** will all give you a virtual forest of forests. In addition, cards like **Gaea's Bounty** and **Hunting Cheetah** (a *Portal Three Kingdoms* card) will suck forests out of your deck and into your hand. Once you have a land-filled hand, **Exploration**, **Fastbond**, and **Gaea's Touch** can get those forests onto the table in a hurry. It doesn't take many of these cards to have your side of the table quickly get ridiculous.

Notice that I am not focusing on green's ability to generate mana as much as I'm focusing on land. Of course, cards like **Llanowar Elves**, **Vernal Bloom**, and **Werebear** will give you more *mana*, but in a land deck we care about land first and foremost.

Okay, so green can put a lot of forests onto the table. Big deal. You can't win with land.

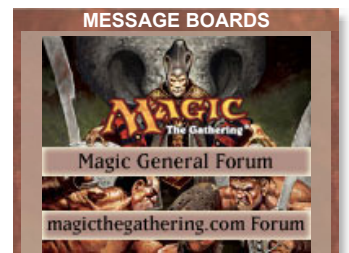
Or can you? Below are some ideas for what to do with your land deck's forests once they're staring an opponent in the face. This list isn't exhaustive, but it should give you a place to begin your own evil machinations.

LAND . . . ATTACK!

Perhaps the most fun option in a land deck is to beat an opponent into mulch with your land. Green provides several ways to turn lands into creatures, especially with cards like **Nature's Revolt**, **Animate Land**, **Life/Death**, **Living Lands**, **Thelonite Druid**, **Living Plane**, **Living Terrain**, and **Natural Affinity**. My favorite options for this kind of strategy, however, are

- **Jolrael, Empress of Beasts**, which can turn land into whopping 3/3 monsters (er, beasts),
- **Quirion Druid** and **Verdant Touch**, which have permanent animating effects, and
- **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa**, which is a land animator and **Overrun** in one!

Final Wrap-up
[Top 8 Video Archives](#)





[Greener Pastures](#) is another fun way to turn a lot of land into an offensive advantage, even though it isn't a land animator per se. In addition, a deck that seeks to attack with land can use [Skyshroud Blessing](#) and [Llanowar Druid](#) for a more successful all-out alpha strike. Oh, and if you pursue this route, don't forget self-animating lands like [Treetop Village](#).

Fist of Wood		
"Casual" Land-Animator Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
18 Forest	1 Jolrael, Empress of Beasts	2 Epic Struggle
1 Gaea's Cradle	1 Kamahl, Fist of Krosa	4 Lay of the Land
4 Treetop Village	4 Llanowar Druid	4 Nature's Lore
23 lands	4 Thelonite Druid	4 Nature's Revolt
	4 Wood Elves	4 Skyshroud Blessing
	14 creatures	4 Skyshroud Claim
		1 Verdant Touch
		23 other spells

TAKE MY FOREST, PLEASE

Once you have a horde of forests, another option for your deck is to consider land a disposable resource. [Sylvan Safekeeper](#) recently reminded us that sometimes a land can be used for more than simply producing mana. Cards from earlier expansions that are great fun in a sacrificial-land deck are [Heartwood Giant](#), [Spitting Spider](#), [Constant Mists](#), [Foratog](#), [Squirrel Wrangler](#), and [Fungus Elemental](#).

What is particularly fun about a deck like this is that green can also recycle its land fairly effectively. [Groundskeeper](#), [Harvest Wurm](#), and [Cartographer](#) are examples of how to bring your lands back from the "dead," or you can simply put them to good use with cards like [Forgotten Harvest](#).

Fungus Among Us		
"Casual" Sacrificial-Land Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
26 Forest	1 Cartographer	3 Constant Mists
26 lands	4 Groundskeeper	4 Exploration
	4 Fungus Elemental	4 Harrow
	4 Harvest Wurm	11 other spells
	3 Heartwood Giant	
	1 Spitting Spider	
	2 Squirrel Wrangler	
	4 Sylvan Safekeeper	
	23 creatures	

STRONG AS BLANCHWOOD

On the other hand, you may *want* all of those forests around. Why expose your land to creature-elimination spells or dispose of it when you can truly horde your land? Some cards continue to get better and better with more forests on the table. Some examples of potentially huge creatures are [Gaea's Liege](#); [Uktabi Wildcats](#); [Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer](#); and any creature enchanted with [Blanchwood Armor](#). Other cards, such as [Waiting in the Weeds](#) and [Rofellos, Llanowar Emissary](#), also get better with more forests. And doesn't a nearly monogreen deck with a horde of land sound fun, especially when it's packing [Last Stand](#)?

The following is an example of a monogreen deck looking to maximize the benefit of wood:



Blanchwood Extended Land Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
23 Forest	3 Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer	2 Blanchwood Armor
1 Gaea's Cradle	4 Multani's Acolyte	4 Desert Twister
1 Yavimaya Hollow	2 Silverglade Elemental	4 Exploration
25 lands	4 Uktabi Wildcats	4 Skyshroud Claim
	4 Wall of Blossoms	14 other spells
	4 Yavimaya Elder	
	21 creatures	

JOLLY GREEN GIANT

Finally, and most obvious, if you have a sea of land on the table, you also have access to a sea of mana. You might as well use all that mana to cast some of green's gargantuan spells.

The options here fall into two basic categories. On one hand, you have green "X" spells like *Ivy Elemental*, *Thrive*, *Krakilin*, *Hurricane*, *Verdeloth the Ancient*, and even *Flock of Rabid Sheep*. These spells get better the more mana you have available, so they fit perfectly into a land deck. Cards like *Centaur Glade* probably fit into this category as well.

On the other hand, you have huge . . . wait, that's not impressive enough . . . You have *huge* green spells like *Thorn Elemental*, *Crush of Wurms*, *Mythic Proportions*, *Vitalizing Wind*, and *Biorhythm*. These cards are monumentally expensive, have monumental effects on the game, and can be easily cast using your monumental number of lands. Slightly less expensive -- but normally cost-prohibitive -- cards like *Desert Twister*, *Restock*, and *Collective Unconscious* should be considered mainstays of the land deck too.

The ability to cast big fatties certainly isn't unique to a land deck -- green can accelerate its mana in a variety of ways. But it's just as much fun to cast them in a land deck as it is in other green decks.



Big Green Extended Land Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
1 Dust Bowl	1 Krakilin	2 Centaur Glade
18 Forest	1 Molimo, Maro-Sorcerer	2 Crop Rotation
1 Gaea's Cradle	4 Rofellos, Llanowar Emissary	2 Crush of Wurms
2 Treetop Village	1 Silvos, Rogue Elemental	4 Desert Twister
1 Yavimaya Hollow	4 Wall of Mulch	2 Planar Portal
23 lands	4 Wall of Roots	4 Rampant Growth
	15 creatures	1 Restock
		4 Skyshroud Claim
		1 Urza's Blueprints
		22 other spells

Although I can pinpoint why green stands out among the other colors as my favorite, I don't know if I can unpack my weird rationale for loving land decks. Whatever the reasons, I hope to have sparked some ideas in your brain. Today is a day to focus on the deck-of-many-forests, but you can only imagine the possibilities when you add green's land explosion to any of the other colors. *Dragon Roost*, *Time Stretch*, and *Dregs of Sorrow*. . . oh my!

On an unrelated note, I want to end today by mentioning that my first fantasy novel, *Birthright*, has just been published by Virtualbookworm.com. I hope you'll check it out and let me know what you think.

Have fun with your land!

-- j

Jay may be reached at houseofcards@wizards.com.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar](#) archive

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

