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Rev Your Engine

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House of Cards
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I don't think anyone who reads "House of Cards" will argue the fact that I have a serious "Johnny" streak in me. I cannot tell a lie: I love weird decks, *especially* when I create them.

But, I pretty much stink at making good (or even passable) mana engines. For some reason, when I think about a deck trying to produce a lot of mana, I think *Skyshroud Claim*, not *Ashnod's Altar*. Mana engines confuse me. I have to stare at them a *really* long time before I vaguely understand what they do.

You can imagine my enthusiasm, then, when we decided to do Mana Engine Week here at MagicTheGathering.com. Eesh.

For any of you just dropping into Mana Engine Week today, here's some background info: "Mana engines" are called such because they take disparate cards that work together like a machine to produce obscene amounts of mana (usually the amount is "infinite," although really any amount over, say, forty should do). Mana engines rarely involve two cards. Somewhere there's an unwritten rule that says as many cards as utterly possible must be used to produce their weird effects.

The engines define the decks in which they reside. Add tutors like *Diabolic Tutor* or *Burning Wish* to search for the parts, a kill card (such as *Blaze*, *Firecat Blitz*, *Centaur Glade*), or maybe a *Counterspell* or two to protect the engine, and you pretty much have your mana-engine combo deck built.

[Anthony](#) and [Aaron](#) have already regaled you with spiffy combos that produce arbitrarily large amounts of mana. They both focused primarily on older cards, which is appropriate. Most people would agree that mana engines are from the days of yore -- that the really cool engines disappeared back sometime during Urza block, never to be seen again.

That may be true, but it is still possible in today's Standard to generate a ton of mana via an "engine." These engines are fragile, freaky, inconsistent, and more than a little goofy, but they *do* exist. Today, it's my job to point you toward a few of the engines available in recent sets.

The tricky part is coming up with the engine. The following are some potential starting points in Standard:

Land Untappers

As you can imagine, if your goal is to make a lot of mana, then it's extremely helpful to have a card that helps you untap your lands. *Elder Druid* is a good example, except that he costs 3 to activate. It's far better to have something like *Deserted Temple*, which costs 1, or *Krosan Restorer*, which doesn't cost any additional mana.

One problem with land untappers in Standard is that no lands other than *Cabal Coffers* produce more than one mana. No *Gaea's Cradle* or *Tolarian Academy* (thank goodness) exist. Your solution is threefold: First, you can try to untap more than one land at a time. *Telekinetic Bonds* can potentially untap a lot of lands if you are discarding cards and already have a hefty mana pool. *Krosan Restorer* untaps three lands once you achieve threshold. *Early Harvest* untaps *all* of your basic lands as a one-shot endeavor. File these facts away for later use.



Ingredient 1: Land untappers.

Land Enhancers

A second way to add punch to Standard land is to add extra mana to your lands. It sounds obvious, but *Wild Growth* means that *Krosan Restorer* and *Early Harvest* just gained you an additional mana per use. If the land has *Elvish Guidance* on it, you now have potential for a good deal more mana. Imagine having two *Llanowar Elves*, a *Wirewood Elf*, three forests (one enchanted with *Elvish Guidance*), threshold, and *Krosan Restorer*. Right there you have access to fifteen green mana. Pretty good, but we can do better.

A more reliable way to get more bang for your lands is to use something like *Mirari's Wake*, or *Vernal Bloom*. Now every land (or at least every forest) produces twice its normal mana. With the land untappers above, that has to be good for something, right?

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Let's see . . .



With **Mirari's Wake** and **Early Harvest**, I can get a ton of mana. Add the **Mirari** itself to duplicate the Harvest and I can get *tons* of mana. Add **Bearscape** to the mix, and I can then remove **Early Harvest** from the game and get it back with **Cunning Wish** to start the process all over again. And then . . . hmm . . . wait, that's getting confusing.

With **Mirari's Wake**, **Compulsion**, **Telekinetic Bonds**, and **Krosan Restorer**, I can pay 1U , discard a card, pay 1U more (2U total) to untap the Restorer, which allows me to untap three lands and tap them again for six mana assuming I have threshold -- that's a net gain of two mana. And because I'm drawing a card from **Compulsion**, I can do it all over again. Whew.

Ingredient 2: Land enhancers.

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Whew Standard Mana-Engine Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
2 Brushland	4 Birds of Paradise	1 Centaur Glade
8 Forest	4 Krosan Restorer	4 Circular Logic
2 Grand Coliseum	4 Krosan Tusker	4 Compulsion
10 Island	4 Merfolk Looter	4 Mirari's Wake
1 Plains		4 Obsessive Search
23 lands	16 creatures	4 Telekinetic Bonds
		21 other spells

Creature Untappers

A third way to get more bang for your lands in Standard is to focus on untapping creatures. The **Telekinetic Bonds** example above shows how a repeatedly untapping **Krosan Restorer** can quickly get crazy. **Puppeteer**, **Aphetto Alchemist**, and **Seeker of Skybreak** can each untap the Restorer once. **Wirewood Lodge** could do it if the Restorer were an Elf. Hey . . .

Play **Artificial Evolution** on **Krosan Restorer** to make it an Elf, then use **Wirewood Lodge**. For 1U , **Wirewood Lodge** can untap the Restorer, which can then untap it and two other lands once you have threshold. This nets you one mana for each iteration, which is good enough for a mana engine.

Of course, the Restorer isn't the only creature that's useful to untap when looking for a mana engine. **Priest of Titania** doesn't exist in Standard, but you can get 2U out of a single **Fyndhorn Elder** (which happens to be an Elf!). Add **Aggravated Assault**, another **Elder**, and two **Birds of Paradise**, and you can tap the critters for 4U , activate the Assault to untap everything and do it all over again. That, too, nets you one mana for each iteration.



Ingredient 3: Creature untappers.

Praying for Glade Standard Mana-Engine Deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
10 Forest	4 Birds of Paradise	4 Aggravated Assault
2 Mountain	4 Fyndhorn Elder	4 Centaur Glade
2 Plains	4 Harvester Druid	4 Explosive Vegetation
4 Windswept Heath	4 Krosan Tusker	4 Mirari's Wake
4 Wooded Foothills	4 Llanowar Elves	16 other spells
22 lands	2 Nantuko Elder	
	22 creatures	

Or use **Aggravated Assault**, **Mirari's Wake**, and **Nature's Revolt** (or **Kamahl, Fist of Krosa**) to quickly rev your mana engine. Keen!

That's about all I can think up for land-based mana engines. Undoubtedly, more exist that my wee little brain can't fathom. I never did think of anything for **Cabal Coffers**. Although, it's convenient that with threshold, **Krosan Restorer** can untap just enough land to activate the Coffers a second time.

In any case, here are some additional engine parts to tease your imagination.

Mana Echoes

Here's a neat trick: Play **Firecat Blitz** with **Mana Echoes** on the table and watch the amount of colorless mana in your mana pool go boom! Or, you can try the **Mana Echoes - Words of Wilding - Wirewood Savage - Artificial Evolution** trick described in [last week's article](#).

This little gem comes from Scott Forster and is a graphic example of why **Mana Echoes** should make your brain hurt.

"Here's a nice simple idea . . .

- 1 **Artificial Evolution**
- 1 **Birchlore Rangers**
- 3 **Goblin Sharpshooter**
- 1 **Mana Echoes**
- 1 **Mobilization**
- 3 Soldier tokens created from **Mobilization**

"You play **Artificial Evolution** on your Rangers, changing Elves to Goblins. Tap two lands and two Sharpshooters for 2* and make another Soldier, generating 3. Shoot it with the third Sharpshooter, and untap your Sharpshooters. Tap two Sharpshooters to make * (3* floating). Make a Soldier. Profit 1 every time."

Um, what he said. Moving on . . . quickly . . .



Verdant Succession

Before **Onslaught** pushed **Invasion**, **Planeshift**, and **Apocalypse** out of Standard, a mana engine involving **Verdant Succession**, **Nantuko Tracer**, and **Phyrexian Altar** existed. With Succession on the table, you sacrificed your Tracer to the Altar for one mana and used the Succession to get another **Nantuko Tracer**, which targeted the first Tracer now in your graveyard to add back into your library. Rinse and repeat. It was a neat trick (see [Deck Challenge 2](#) under "Rogues Gallery" for a decklist), but we no longer have **Phyrexian Altar** in Standard. **Artificial Evolution** to the rescue! Add **Skirk Prospector** and change all instances of "Goblin" to either "Insect" or "Druid" and you have the same loop.

Are there more mana engines than those I've outlined above? You betcha. They're out there waiting for you discover them. Mana engines -- however goofy -- do exist in current Standard. The decks that surround them prove to be equally goofy, which makes them all the more fun when they work.

Finally, I received such great responses from my article on [land decks](#) that it's clear you all want to see a few more decklists. Below are two monogreen decks-of-many-forests sent to me (remember, I love reading the decklists you send me, but I can't give feedback on them). Both deckbuilders claim the decks are loads of fun to play, and I find both decks very different from what I presented two weeks ago. Enjoy!



-- j

The Shortest Decklist		
Extended Monogreen Land deck - Peter Vieren		
Main Deck 60 cards		
36 Forest	_____	4 Constant Mists
36 lands	0 creatures	4 Exploration
		4 Horn of Greed
		4 Nature's Revolt
		4 Rowen
		4 Summer Bloom

		24 other spells

Scalpelexis? Nooo!!!!

Standard Monogreen Land deck - Mike Kioski



Main Deck 60 cards

42 Forest
4 Tranquil Thicket

46 lands

4 Nantuko Cultivator
4 Terravore

8 creatures

4 Rites of Spring
2 Rowen

6 other spells

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