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**H**appy Thanksgiving everyone! I'm lucky enough to get the Thanksgiving column this year, and I plan on making it count. Who knows when Thanksgiving will fall on a Thursday again? (Though, to be honest, what I'm most looking forward to is the day my column appears on Easter. I've got some extra-special treats I've been saving up for that one!)

I've got plenty of things to be thankful for this year. For starters, I'm thankful that I have a widely-read Internet column where I can freely share my pro-vegetarian rhetoric on this, the most meat-centric day of the year. This may not have anything to do with **Magic**, but if the website editors will indulge me for a paragraph or two, let's examine the underpinnings behind the so-called "Turkey Day." It's no secret that the cruelly murderous poultry industr [blah blah blah --Ed.] that *Mirrodin* has finally arrived on **Magic Online**! Like many other Wizards of the Coasters, I love the window of time after a new expansion goes live online, but before sanctioned tournaments start. For these few precious days, people actually play in the Casual Drafts room because they're so eager to get their hands on the new cards, and drafting with three boosters is much more interesting than simply opening three boosters. Since I'm not allowed to play in sanctioned drafts, I have to wait for these three or four times a year to have unlimited online drafts on demand. Now that it's here, it's like some sort of holiday!

This may come out of left field, but I'm also thankful for goofy *Mirrodin* cards. No, really! For the casual constructed enthusiast, *Mirrodin* is as deep as Shaquille O'Neal's swimming pool. In today's column, I'm going to find fun things to do with Tangleroot, Vermiculos, and Gate to the Aether.

## The Root of All Evil

As longtime readers know, I love to make puns in my section headers—almost as much as Mark Rosewater does. This header is a take-off of that old phrase "the root of all greenvils."

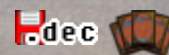
As a paranoid person, I constantly worry that one of the decks I'm writing about will appear in Anthony's or Brian's column earlier in the same week. And yes, Brian David-Marshall nearly stepped on my toes yesterday! Or I nearly stepped on his today. It's hard to tell when you're moshing. He came thisclose to writing up a Tangleroot-Words of Wind combo deck. Had he done so, I would have had to scrap mine and come up with something new at the last minute. Since that smacks of "work," I'm not interested. Luckily for me, Brian didn't post a Tangleroot deck, and his Words of Wind deck is different enough from mine that they can exist side-by-side. Words of Wind was crippled during development, yet here it is as the most durable of the Words enchantments. It almost feels like a modern-day Stasis, and it fuels a family of combo lock decks.

I didn't start my deck with the Words, though. I started with Tangleroot. While brainstorming combos that could take advantage of it, I quickly hit upon Aether Barrier: With Tangleroot in play, Aether Barrier does... absolutely nothing!!! Next! Customs Depot occurred to me as a possibility (which is the first time a **Magic** player has ever said *that*), but the actual first card I thought of was Equilibrium. Tangleroot automatically pays the Equilibrium cost, allowing you to bounce creatures all day. That led me to Words of Wind. With Words of Wind and Tangleroot on the board, a Merchant of Secrets is (in Brian's apt terminology) an untargeted Capsize with buyback for 2. Sure, your opponent gets to choose his or her bounced permanent, but the idea is to get this going often enough in the same turn to leave your opponent with no permanents at all.

What else works with both Tangleroot and Words of Wind? Unifying Theory! The chalkboard turns your Hapless Researcher into a better Merchant of Secrets. With the Words and the Theory on the board (hey—maybe that’s the unifying theory that’s getting blown around in the Words of Wind art), any creature leads to recursive fun. The creature has to be cheap enough, of course; my favorites for this deck are Wood Elves and Maggot Carrier. The comes-into-play abilities mean the Elves are a 5 untargeted-Capsize-with-buyback-*plus*-fetch-a-forest and the Carrier is a 3 untargeted-Capsize-with-buyback-*plus*-everyone loses life. And what of Tangleroot? It defrays any of these extracurricular enchantment costs. It’s a weird, narrow, but efficient way of generating a healthy amount of excess mana. The more recursion tricks you play, the more mana Tangleroot generates; the more mana Tangleroot generates, the more recursion tricks you can play. Plus, without the mana sinks you’ve got, your opponent will often end up taking Tangleroot burn.



## Root Drive



### Main Deck 60 cards

2 Darigaaz's Caldera	4 Hapless Researcher	2 Equilibrium
6 Forest	4 Maggot Carrier	2 Fabricate
8 Island	4 Merchant of Secrets	4 Howling Mine
3 Riptide Laboratory	4 Wood Elves	4 Tangleroot
4 Salt Marsh		4 Unifying Theory
1 Swamp	16 creatures	4 Words of Wind
24 lands		20 other spells

The Howling Mines are there to help you find your combo pieces and, once you have, to provide extra Words of Wind muscle. You do want to return Wood Elves to your hand, don't you? Be warned that this deck is very tricky to play. In the mid-game, it turns into a puzzle: Any given turn has a number of sequential action options backed up by tricky mana math. Do you pay for the Theory now, or hold your mana? Do you bounce the Elves or a Wizard? Did you take into account the untapped Forest the Elves bring with them? The headache you'll get is almost as big as the one you'll give your opponents. But as long as theirs is bigger, it's all worth it!

## As the Worm Turns

Vermiculos comes from the same root as vermicelli. "Vermi-" is the combining form of "worm," which, of course, is what vermicelli is made of. Bon appetit!

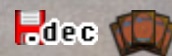


A rare, 5-mana 1/1 creature seemed bad enough to build a deck around. Unfortunately, worm-boy didn't want to play along. When possible, I like to test the decks I post here by playing them online under the name Doctor Wombat. Doing so lets me advance the decks from first drafts to second drafts, and it lets me prove to myself that they're actually capable of winning. Sometimes. Well, at least once. I haven't been able to test my decks online for a while, though, because *Mirrodin* wasn't available. Now that it is, I was looking forward to receiving a full card set. (Remember what I said earlier about not being able to play in sanctioned events, including drafts? This is the trade-off.) However, it seems that the **Magic Online** powers that be had more important things to do this week than cater to the selfish whims of rambling Internet columnists, so I was on my own. Not to worry, I just opened a bazillion packs. I kept going until I got a four-pack of Tangleroots. I got full sets of Timesifters and Gates to the Aethers for today's third deck. I wound up with 8 Solar Tides, 50 Hematite Golems, and zero Vermiculosos. It's tough to test a Vermiculos deck that way.

See, the idea I had was to combo Vermiculos with Second Sunrise. Somehow eat all your artifacts (Atog's usually hungry), pop them back with the Sunrise, watch your Vermiculos grow to obscene proportions, eat your artifacts *again* with Atog, and attack with a couple of huge monsters. Will this be a consistent deck? I truly doubt it. Will it be awesome when it hits? You know it. There are two other ways to go jumbo. With Pentavus in play, Vermiculos has "1: Vermiculos gets +4/+4 until end of turn." If you're a long-term thinker, it's got "2: Vermiculos gets +4/+4 until end of turn" because moving a counter off, then back onto, Pentavus means you can pump up Vermiculos forever. The total Pentavite swarm makes a 21/21 Vermiculos. Myr Incubator, which isn't nearly as broken without its pal Tinker, can also put a bunch of artifacts into play at once.

Although the mega-Vermiculos kill is the most fun route to victory, this deck includes ways to keep it consistently 5/5 or 9/9 on your turn. It's got lots of cheap artifacts, including Myr Retrievers and even more Howling Mines to help you play multiple artifacts on the same turn. Twelve artifact lands (see—being a three color deck is a *good* thing) feed our wormy Horror as well.

## Dawn of the Worms



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 Ancient Den	4 Atog	4 Howling Mine
4 Great Furnace	4 Myr Retriever	1 Myr Incubator
1 Mountain	3 Pentavus	3 Pyrite Spellbomb
7 Plains	4 Vermiculos	4 Second Sunrise
4 Urborg Volcano		2 Shrapnel Blast
4 Vault of Whispers	15 creatures	4 Talisman of Indulgence
		1 Trash for Treasure
		2 Vorrac Battlehorns
24 lands		
		21 other spells

The Battlehorns are there to give Vermily trample. It would be a shame if the one time you got it up to 25/25 it was chump-blocked by an Iron Myr, right?

## Swinging Gate

Today's final deck features the *Mirrodin* card that R&D denizen Brian Schneider fears above all others: Timesifter. He worried during development that it was hideously broken. He was right, and it was fixed. But he never stopped worrying about the card. Nothing is less fun in a game of **Magic** than when your opponent just starts taking all the rest of the turns, because then you're not even playing anymore. You're watching your opponent play solitaire.



We'll see if Timesifter does anything obnoxious in tournaments. I can't predict that. However, I can predict that it will be the most-banned card of the year in casual play. Timesifter decks are fun to build, fun to play, and fun to pull off—but your friends aren't going to put up with those sorts of shenanigans for very long. So take advantage of it while you can! The pair of cards this deck revolves around is Timesifter and Gate to the Aether. That's not exactly a combo because the cards don't directly interact with each other. Rather, they both interact with the top of your deck. Fill your deck with library manipulation and expensive permanents (and remember, both Timesifter and the Gate already *are* expensive permanents), and you'll be in control of time itself.

One of my favorite aspects of deckbuilding is finding a home for awful cards. There are two very weak cards that spring to life in this deck. They're so bad elsewhere, and so perfect here, it was as if they were designed for this deck and no other. One is Spy Network. It's pure card disadvantage, as you spend a card to get nothing. But wait! You peek at your opponent's hand (which will be useful in a second). You see the top card of your opponent's library, which is vital information with a Timesifter in play. *Then* you stack the top of your deck. In the very early game, this can dig out land. Later on, you set yourself up so your cards are right where they need to be when Timesifter or Gate to the Aether triggers. The other superstar in this deck is Metamorphose. Do you want to take the next Timesifter turn? Put your opponent's Forest on top of his or her deck. If you know what the top card of your deck is, you can Metamorphose your opponent's most expensive card that's less expensive than the card you have waiting—then Timesifter will whisk it away to the removed from game zone. The big drawback of Metamorphose was always the nasty surprise your opponent will pop out... but you know what dangers could be coming thanks to Spy Network. Anyway, if you're guaranteed the next couple of turns, how bad could a random permanent from your opponent be?

Let's not forget about victory conditions. There are plenty available with nice, fat mana costs: Symbiotic Wurm, Reiver Demon, Scornful Egotist. I've chosen Tidal Kraken (because you can actually cast it if necessary) Akroma (because it's the best), and Scion of Darkness (because it cycles—if Akroma is trapped in your hand, it's stuck there forever unless your opponent does something dumb like play Metamorphose).

## Main Deck

60 cards

24 Island	3 Akroma, Angel of Wrath	4 Boomerang
24 lands	4 Sage Owl	2 Discombobulate
	3 Scion of Darkness	4 Gate to the AETHER
	2 Tidal Kraken	2 Index
	12 creatures	4 Metamorphose
		4 Spy Network
		4 Timesifter
		24 other spells

Be warned again: This is another headache-inducing deck. I've played it, and it's brain-twisting. When you're stacking your deck, you've got to see a few turns in advance to figure out which cards are in line to be drawn and which will be revealed—and the turn structure isn't linear here. You normally only need to keep track of your hand and the in-play zone. With this deck, you've got to keep track of your hand, your opponent's hand, the in-play zone, the top few cards of each player's deck, and whose turn it's going to be next. The deck teeters on the edge the whole time, but when it wins, it's exhilarating. Overall, though, I guess what I'm the most thankful for is headache medicine.

Until next week, thanks!

Mark

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Mark may be reached at [houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com). Send rules-related **Magic** questions to [ask@wizards.com](mailto:ask@wizards.com).

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