

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

Fun With Fungus (Part 1)

Ben Bleiweiss
Building on a Budget
Monday, January 15, 2007



hey everyone! Could this be it? Could it be time for the most demanded Building on a Budget column in Building on a Budget history?

Is Ben really going to tinker with Fun With Fungus?

Yes! Hallelujah!
 Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me Twice, shame on me!
 I skipped this poll entirely.

It's not a dream. It's not a hoax. It's not an alternate reality, a fake-out, a false start, a bait-and-switch, or any other practice illegal in the 48 contiguous states. It's time to evolve the Fun with Fungus *Time Spiral* theme deck!

Fun with Fungus
Time Spiral Theme Deck

Main Deck
60 cards

13 Forest 1 Pendelhaven 10 Swamp <hr/> 24 lands	2 Thallid 3 Deathspore Thallid 2 Herd Gnarr 2 Pendelhaven Elder 2 Savage Thallid 2 Sporesower Thallid 3 Thallid Germinator 3 Thallid Shell-Dweller 1 Thelon of Havenwood 1 Wormwood Dryad <hr/> 21 creatures	1 Claws of Gix 1 Assassinate 1 Dread Return 2 Fallen Ideal 1 Feebleness 1 Krosan Grip 1 Might of Old Krosa 2 Sprout 2 Strength in Numbers 2 Sudden Death 1 Verdant Embrace <hr/> 15 other spells
--	--	---

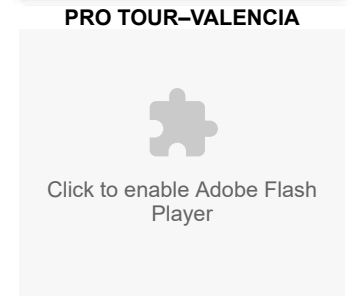
Like most other theme decks, Fun with Fungus is a loosely-knit collection of ideas and possibilities. There's a smattering of several different themes running through the veins of this package of sixty cards. Let's take a look at them, shall we?

Theme #1: Fungus

They are here to have fun with, no? The primary theme of this deck is to play around with, as we refer to them in the scientific community, *tokinus generatus*, or the common **Thallid**. These pieces of living mold in turn generate Saprolings. In the end, you have a field that reminds me of a golf course, with the **Thallids** making up the fairway, and the Saprolings making up the green.

There are many cards in this deck which tie into this theme. **Thallid**, **Thallid Shell-Dweller**, **Deathspore Thallid**, **Thallid Germinator**, **Sporesower Thallid**, and **Savage Thallid** all have the "remove three Spore Counters: Make a Saproling" mechanic. This mechanic is both a strength and a weakness. It's a strength in that every third turn, you can make a free 1/1 creature, based on your initial investment. It's a weakness in that two out of every three turns, those counters are utterly useless.

Other cards which contribute to the Fungus theme are **Sprout** (look ma! No hands!), **Thelon of Havenwood** (making spore counters count every turn since '06!), and **Verdant Embrace** (making creatures into **Verdant Force** on the cheap).



Theme #2: Turning smaller creatures into larger ones

This is the second, more prevalent, theme in the Fun with Fungus theme deck. There are several cards which turn your little mice into **Marrow-Gnawer**, the Rat with a Taste for Revenge. Aside from the aforementioned **Verdant Embrace**, **Thelon of Havenwood** and **Thallid Germinator**, there's also **Strength in Numbers**, **Might of Old Krosa**, **Fallen Ideal**, **Pendelhaven**, and **Pendelhaven Elder**. I guess we can also lump **Herd Gnarr** in here, as it is made bigger whenever you remove those three spore counters to poop out another Saproling (how else do you think they reproduce!).

Theme #3: Killing stuff!

You're playing black! You are the mage who likes to kill stuff! **Deathspore Thallid**, **Feebleness**, **Sudden Death**, **Assassinate**, and **Krosan Grip** are your kill suite, though I wonder why you'd want to play one sorcery-speed **Assassinate** but only two copies of the übermensch **Sudden Death**?

Those are the three main themes of Fun With Fungus. There's a couple of other cards in the deck, so let's give them the star treatment quickly, shall we?

1. **Dread Return**: In the deck because with all the token generation, you stand a very good chance of being able to flash it back. However, **Savage Thallid** and **Sporesower Thallid** are your two largest creatures, and neither of them costs much more than **Dread Return** itself. Reanimation spells are best used to cheat mana costs (bringing back **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath**, on turn four), so the uses for **Dread Return** are pretty minimal. Given that there are only four copies total of the above-mentioned fatties in this deck, **Dread Return** does not look long for this world....
2. **Claws of Gix**: Wasn't this in the initial build of [that other Theme deck I evolved?](#) In that deck, **Claws of Gix** was there as a way to up your storm count for free. In this deck, **Claws of Gix** is there to gain life from the multitude of creatures that you'll be generating off of all your **Thallids**.
3. **Wormwood Dryad**: Why in tarnation is this card in this deck? What purpose does it serve? It's a mystery, and only you can solve it! E-mail me using the link at the bottom of the column with your explanation about why **Wormwood Dryad** was included in the Fun with Fungus deck, and whoever comes up with the best/funniest explanation gets their answer printed in next week's column!
4. **Swamps/Forests**: I have no clue why these are in the deck either.... Oh wait, they let you cast the spells. I like casting spells, fellow wizard!

So what are my initial impressions? This particular theme deck is pretty straightforward, and the themes are all interconnected. You want to drop a bunch of guys who make other guys, pump up both the guys who make guys and the guys who were made from guys, and then kill the guys your opponent has so your guys and your other guys can get to the guy across the table and winning ensues!

I do see several problems with the deck, but that comes with a caveat: Theme decks are designed to be tinkered with. What's the fun in opening up a fully-tournament worthy deck out of a box, and not having to come up with cool ideas and neat combos on your own? Ok, Spike in the back, you sit down. The rest of you, each theme deck can take on your own personality. You like **Thallids**? Take out some of the kill or pump, and put in more **Thallids**. You like creature kill? Take out some pump and put in more destruction! You like pump spells? I like Pump much better than DDR, thankyouverymuch.



Ok, back to the problems. For one, the mana base is a little screwy. There are 6 unique cards in the deck that use black mana (10 total cards), but there are also 10 Swamps in the deck. By contrast, there are 14 unique green cards in the deck (24 total) with 14 Forests (counting **Pendelhaven** as a Forest here) in the deck. The ratio of colored mana to spells is definitely off, and will eventually need fixing. This can probably be solved via **Golgari Rot Farm**, since we can turn some of those Swamps into lands which produce both green and black.



Second, the deck is very low on creatures. Counting **Sprout**, there are 23 creatures in the deck, meaning that roughly one out of every three cards will yield you a creature spell. The deck has literally no way to kill an opponent outside of attacking with creatures, and a majority of the



creatures are intrinsically weak on the power/toughness to mana-cost ratio. Three of your guys have defender, nine of your men are 1/1, and the deck can't exactly pump out a quick swarm to beat down an opponent with, which leads to:

Third: **Thallids** are inherently weak. This is not to offend anyone, but the mechanic is one of the weaker ones. Let's look at **Thallid** itself:

Turn 1: Played as a 1/1 creature.

Turn 2: 1/1 creature.

Turn 3: 1/1 creature.

Turn 4: 1/1 creature that can make another 1/1 creature.

Turn 5: You have two 1/1 creatures that can attack.

The payoff for playing a first-turn **Thallid** is not spectacular. This is not to say that all **Thallids** are bad – it's just to say that the **Thallid** mechanic needs a lot of help to get off the ground. **Thallid Germinator**, **Deathspore Thallid**, **Thallid Shell-Dweller**, and **Thallid** itself are not going to beat down your opponent without help. The two toughness on **Savage Thallid** is a killer, leaving **Sporesower Thallid** as the best of the bunch. Four mana for a 4/4 creature is respectable, plus he speeds up the timetable of your

mechanic on other **Thallids**.

Let's get some practice games under my belt before I start making changes to the deck.

Game 1: William11ngu (U/W Suspend)

He gets **Deep-Sea Kraken**, but doesn't have much else going. He bounces a couple of my early **Thallids**, and gets **Deep-Sea Kraken** down to one suspend counter. In order to deal with **Deep-Sea Kraken**, I **Sudden Death** my own Saproling. This removes the **Deep-Sea Kraken** from the game permanently, and ends his offensive threats for the game. My **Thallids** eventually overwhelm him.

Record: 1-0

Notes about Game 1: I get stuck at four mana for the entire game, with two **Savage Thallids** in hand. For those who are unfamiliar with the Split Second/**Deep-Sea Kraken** trick, here's how it works: When **Deep-Sea Kraken** has one counter left, you play a split second spell (any will do). This triggers the removal of the last counter on the Kraken. Since you still have a split second spell on the stack, **Deep-Sea Kraken** cannot be played. This keeps him removed from the game with no time counters. Once this happens, he's gone for good.

Game 2: Cwampthing (U/R Control)

I mulligan a one-land hand, and end up with a second six-card hand with two Swamps and no Forests. Luckily, I draw **Pendelhaven** on turn one (I'm on the draw). He ends up mana flooded, and doesn't get much going due to a lack of spells, and a plethora of mana. I beat half his life total out with **Sprout** plus **Pendelhaven**, and then drop **Savage Thallid** to finish the game.

Record: 2-0

Game 3: Schappi83 (Five-Color Good Stuff)

Schappi83 is playing an 80ish-card five-color deck with a whole bunch of Good Stuff (**Mortify**, **Putrefy**, **Kaervek**, **Lightning Helix**, etc), and a ton of bounce lands, dual lands, and land search. He gets mana flooded, gets 16 lands to the board, and I still can't kill him. I kill **Kaervek** and two **Razias** (go **Sudden Death**) but eventually succumb to **Zombify** on Razia.

Record: 2-1

Notes about Game 3: This is the first game that I get **Fallen Ideal** plus **Claws of Gix**. For every four mana I spend, I am able to gain one life. This is not efficient life gain, but it kept me alive for an extra couple of turns at the end of the game when facing down Razia. I also had a turn where I attacked with Thelon into his Razia, which I had already enchanted with **Feebleness**. He blocked and redirected the damage dealt by Thelon back to Thelon. After damage was on the stack, I sacrificed Thelon to **Claws of Gix**. This meant that there was no target left for Razia to redirect damage to, and Razia died. Note that this trick is similar to ones that let you get around **Temporal Isolation** (If you stack damage with your Temporally Isolated creature, and then sacrifice it before damage is dealt, it will deal full damage since the enchantment is no longer around to prevent the damage from the creature).

Game 4: Bestjett (U/R Izzet)

He suspends turn-one **Ancestral Vision** and then kills me on turn 6 with double **Wee Dragonauts**. My board is a bunch of 0/5 walls.



Record: 2-2

Notes about Game 4: Man, I wished those **Thallid Shell-Dwellers** were **Wall of Roots**, because at least I could have started busting out my 4/4's a turn early. It mattered, because I never got past three mana this game.

Game 5: Mielebo (Slivers)

He drops **Spinneret Sliver**, and follows it with **Watcher Sliver**. I draw **Sudden Death** but have only one Swamp. He drops **Might Sliver**, and I draw my second Swamp. He uses **Chord of Calling** to fetch a second **Might Sliver**, giving him a board full of 6/8 Slivers. He declines to attack into my imposing board of **Herd Gnarr** and **Pendelhaven Elder**, but I just concede – the point is to test the deck, and at this point I should have been long since dead, instead of sitting there while my opponent gets more than five 6/8 creatures (**Fungus Sliver** being with fifth).

Record: 2-3

Well, the games that I won consisted of me getting bad mana draws, and my opponents getting mana-flooded. In the games I lost, I got worked over pretty well. This deck needs help. My mana needs fixing, I need more ways to deal twenty damage to my opponent, and I need some way to help my Sapolings and **Thallids** go from schoolyard jokes to playground bullies. Going into next week, I leave you with this list of Standard-legal cards that make Sapolings. Can you guess what's coming next?

Standard-Legal Cards that generate Sapolings:

Bramble Elemental
Deathspore Thallid
Fertile Imagination
Fists of Ironwood
Flash Foliage
Golgari Germination
Pollenbright Wings
Sarpadian Empires, Vol. VII
Savage Thallid
Scatter the Seeds
Seed Spark
Selesnya Evangel
Selesnya Guildmage
Sporesower Thallid
Sprout
Supply // Demand
Thallid
Thallid Germinator
Thallid Shell-Dweller
Thelonite Hermit
Ulasht, the Hate Seed
Verdant Embrace
Verdant Force
Verdeloth the Ancient
Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree



As a special feature over the next few weeks, I'm going to be going set by set and pointing out the cards that make great additions to any budget deckbuilder's portfolio. I'll be separating the cards into two categories: Essentials and Specialized. This basically means as follows – the Essentials are cards that, if you're playing that color, you'll probably use over and over again. Examples of Essential cards are **Naturalize**, **Volcanic Hammer**, and **Izzet Boilerworks**. Specialized cards are cards that aren't at universally played as Essential cards, but have their uses. Examples include **Warp World**, **Mark of Eviction**, and **Chastise**.

This week's set? It's *Time Spiral* time! I'll list the cards by color and note whether they are Essential or Specialized. All cards on this list cost two tickets or less. For a primer on how to find the best prices using **Magic Online**, please refer to my [Buying on a Budget](#) article. Most of the commons and uncommons on this list can get gotten at 16-for-a-ticket and 8-for-a-ticket, respectively. Most of the rares are either 2-for-a-ticket, 1 ticket, or 2 tickets each. I've included some highlights of some really good deals I found searching around the rooms. Happy bargain hunting!

White

- S** Benalish Cavalry
- S** Celestial Crusader
- S** Cloudchaser Kestrel
- E** Disenchant
- S** Enduring Renewal
- S** Essence Sliver
- S** Evangelize
- S** Fortify
- S** Griffin Guide
- S** Honorable Passage
- S** Icatian Javelineers
- E** Knight of the Holy Nimbus
- E** Magus of the Disk
- S** Mangara of Corondor
- S** Momentary Blink
- S** Pentarch Paladin
- S** Resurrection
- E** Serra Avenger (1.25 tickets each!)
- E** Temporal Isolation

Blue

- S** Brine Elemental
- E** Cancel
- E** Careful Consideration
- S** Clockspinning
- S** Deep-Sea Kraken
- S** Draining Whelk
- S** Fathom Seer
- S** Flying Men
- E** Looter il-Kor
- S** Magus of the Jar
- S** Mystical Teachings
- S** Ophidian Eye
- S** Sage of Epityr
- S** Snapback
- S** Spell Burst
- E** Think Twice
- S** Trickbind
- S** Vesuvan Shapeshifter
- S** Voidmage Prodigy
- S** Walk the Aeons
- S** Whispers of the Muse
- E** Wipe Away

Black

- E** Bad Moon
- S** Dauthi Slayer

- S** Dread Return
- E** Faceless Butcher
- S** Funeral Charm
- S** Nether Traitor
- S** Shadow Guildmage
- S** Smallpox
- S** Stronghold Overseer
- S** Stupor
- E** Sudden Death
- S** Tendrils of Corruption
- S** Twisted Abomination

Red

- S** Ancient Grudge
- E** Avalanche Riders
- S** Coal Stoker
- S** Disintegrate
- S** Empty the Warrens
- S** Fiery Temper
- S** Grapeshot
- S** Greater Gargadon
- S** Ignite Memories
- E** Jaya Ballard (2 for 1 ticket!)
- S** Lightning Axe
- E** Magus of the Scroll (2 for 1 ticket!)
- S** Mogg War Marshal
- S** Pandemonium
- S** Reiterate
- E** Rift Bolt
- E** Sudden Shock
- E** Sulfurous Blast
- S** Thick-Skinned Goblin
- S** Tribal Flames
- S** Wildfire Emissary

Green

- S** Gaea's Blessing
- S** Hail Storm
- E** Krosan Grip
- S** Might of Old Krosa
- S** Mwonvuli Acid-Moss
- S** Primal Forcemage
- S** Scryb Ranger
- E** Search for Tomorrow
- E** Spectral Force (1 Ticket! Get these now before *Planar Chaos*, if you like green.)
- S** Spike Feeder
- E** Stonewood Invocation (1 Ticket)

S Thelonite Hermit (1 Ticket, and you might see these in a column sooner rather than later....)

S Thornscape Battlemage

E Wall of Roots

E Yavimaya Dryad

Artifact

E Chromatic Star

S Gauntlet of Power

S Prismatic Lens

E Serrated Arrows

S Stuffy Doll (1 Ticket, and ask for four Guilty Conscience as well!)

S The Rack

S Tormod's Crypt

S Triskelavus

Gold

S Harmonic Sliver

S Lightning Angel (2 Tickets)

S Mishra, Artificer Prodigy

S Mystic Enforcer (2 for 1 ticket)

S Saffi Eriksdotter

E Shadowmage Infiltrator (2 Tickets each – Buy of the Week!)

S Stormbind

S Teferi's Moat

S Void

Lands

S Academy Ruins

S Calciform Pools/Dreadship Reef/Fungal Reaches/Molten Slagheap/Saltcrusted Steppe

E Desert

S Pendelhaven

E Terramorphic Expanse

S Urza's Factory

S Vesuva

See you all next week, and until then have Fun with Fungus, and explain that razzin'-frazzin' Dryad to me!

Ben

*Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.*



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

