

# The Wandering Gardens

A Quickphix One-Page Adventure

The locals had been murmuring about Smilax' Challenge. Apparently, anybody who is able to get through Smilax garden and reach their house in the middle gets to claim one of three wondrous gifts: The Blade of Grass, the Thorns of Kinship or the Cape of Vines. Anybody who fails the challenge is shackled to the garden for a full year, forced to tend to it and its master. I had no idea whether these magical items were worth it, but I'm not one to turn down a challenge by a fellow magician. I strolled up to the overgrown structure. A shield at the entrance informed me on the conditions of the challenge: I had to feed a bit of blood and then I was free to enter. I was asked to seek out the three champions of the garden before I could proceed to the center of the garden.

## 4. Stuck in Ambush

I pursued the Champion of the Blade of Grass and his troop to a weird bog. I had trouble walking through it, although they apparently didn't. The Champion sat back and shot at me with some sort of grass bow, while his acolytes charged me, this time with the hellish fruits tied to them. Each time I hit them physically, they exploded into a puff of smoke. I hid in one of the nearby buds and took them off one by one from afar. Otherwise they would have swarmed me. Afterwards the Champion fled once again.

## 5. Getting Permission

In my pursuit I ran past a thorny gate. Past it, I could just make out the large house in the center of the garden. The gate informed me, that the last Champion to fall would open the path for me. As if I needed a reminder to teach that annoying fruit thrower a lesson.

## 6. An Honourable Duel?

I almost ran away after I saw what waited for me around the corner. I assumed the Champion of the Blade of Grass only had the few acolytes that were fighting with him. But no, here around this arena sat two dozen more of them. Thankfully, The Champion congratulated me on coming this far and mocked me for being surprised by the large number of his followers. "The Blades of Grass are many" he proclaimed and challenged me to an honourable duel - just the two of us, no tricks, no intervention. Needless to say: I easily took care of him. His fast and bleeding attacks were no match for my mighty spells. Though his cuts still hurt a lot...

## 7. Twin Thorns

Finally I was to face the last two Champions: the Twin Thorns. They turned out to be two sisters - one huge, wearing a thorny armour while wielding an equally thorny club and tower shield. The other was nimble and wore a leather armor covered in tiny spikes, with small crossbows on each wrist. Their arena of choice was a massive protruding root. They had covered its surface sporadically with massive thorns. On each of which hung one of those infernal fruits. I initially thought, they intended to throw me into them or shoot the fruit to make my navigation more difficult. Little did I know, I was about to enter into the most aggravating fight of my life. Turns out, the sisters were able to swap places with everything touched by their thorns as a reaction. Meaning: when I was trying to hit the nimble sister with a heavy attack, she swapped places with her heavily armored sibling - leaving me to punch useless against a thorny shield. At other times, I was trying to hit them both with an area of effect spell, only to have them both switch place with a piece of fruit. Once I was able to get a rhythm down (switching places apparently was not as effortless as it looked), they unveiled their final tactic. The nimble sisters hit me with one of the thorns, and now she was able to switch me around as well. As absolutely maddening as this was, I managed to beat them down after a long drawn out fight. After they yielded, they led me back to the thorny gate in the center and opened it for me.

## Smilax Mansion

The Presence at the center of the garden greeted me in person. Smilax was not was expected. I figured them for some sort of elf or dryad - but Smilax appeared to be a chimera of sorts. The chitinous face slightly resembled that of a large ant, including two nervously twitching feelers. Their bipedal body was covered in a thick white fur - which on closer inspection resembled the mycelium threads of a mushroom. Its thick white limbs had the spongy texture of a white portobello shroom. It was then that I understood, why the garden had this unnatural ring shape and how Smilax was able to control the entire structure so well: Their threads had spread throughout it. They were the wandering garden. Smilax must have guessed the conclusion I had come to and gave me a slow nod. She pointed me towards a wooden table in the middle of the room. On it was a display of Smilax gifts: The Blade of Grass - given to those who believe in the power of the group to achieve their goals - a thin and deadly sharp blade which wraps itself around the wearers wrist, ready to strike at the blink of an eye. The Thorns of Kinship - given to those how believe progress is made by a mutual bond, sharing both joy and woe equally. The two thorns allow their wearers to swap places within a 30ft. radius in exchange for some blood. The Cape of Vines - given to those who believe progress comes from holding on to ones goals and pursuing it through personal mastery. It can be used as an extra said of hands when carrying or holding on to something. Finally, she pointed towards an optional reward - a cup filled with a white liquid. It was an invitation to join them in their garden and becoming one with its inhabitants.

## Moving on

I accepted the Cape of Vines - I could use it to carry my luggage. Then I put as much distance between me and the garden as possible. As I walked out the gate, the ground shook as the larges structure started to glide away to other lands - to spread Smilax gifts and increase its size, to forever wander onwards.

## 1. The Field of Failed Ambitions

The first stop on my tour through the garden was a grim reminder of what would happen to me, should I botch this challenge. Two fields tended to by about two dozen of prior challengers. Each of them with a vine wrapped around their neck, which constrict and drag them back to the garden should they try to flee. Other than that, they seemed to by doing fine. They were housed in huge redish-flower buds and had enough food and water to sustain them. They urged me to first try and challenge the Champion of Vines.

## 2. Champion of Vines

The Champion and her three acolytes had their own section of the garden with a large pool of fresh water. The Champion was a big woman wearing a cape made out of vines. I accepted her challenge and we fought in the water. Her huge body made it easy for her to grapple me, and each time she did, her vine cape held me in place while she and her acolytes pummeled me senseless.

## 3. Death by a Thousand Cuts

Afterwards I was off to face the Champion of the Blade of Grass in Smilax Orchard. He was a small man, with a band of similarly statured youths as his acolytes. During the fight, he hid behind the trees and used his blade to cut down fruit to pelt me with them. Each of the fruits released a 5ft. puff of smoke which inflicted various effects (see below). Afterwards they all fled further into the garden, before I could face the champion. I examined the fruit and found the following effects:

1. Red: explodes into a fireball
2. Yellow: Glues you to spot
3. Teal: Throws you back
4. Black: Blinds you
5. White: Silences
6. Green: Poisons

