

GARDENS OF IO

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A board game for 2 to 5 players ages 8 and up by
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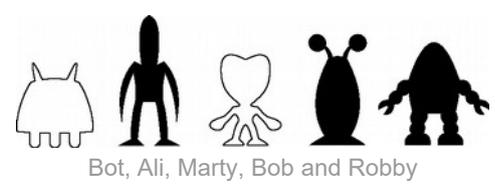
INTRODUCTION

Our beloved Martians from **Gardens of Mars** have travelled to Jupiter's moon **Io**. They've also improved their gardening techniques to avoid stepping on the flowers as they move around the garden. Now they toss rapid-growth seeds from the outside of the garden instead.

Help your little Martian gardener plant flowers to create the grandest, most beautiful **garden on Io**. The Martian with the greenest thumb wins! (Just the thumb: Martians are **not** green.)

MATERIAL

- A board representing a garden on Io (81 circles) and a score track; both checkered for clarity.
- 60 flowers in 6 different colours (10 each).
- A carrying case.
- 6 black Martians in 3 types (2 each).
- 4 white Martians in 2 types (2 each).
- 3 trees (black cones).
- 5 black counters.



GAME SETUP

Place the board in the centre of the table.

Place 1 black counter on each of the five 'special action' spaces (x).

Keep all the flowers in the carrying case. Now each player draws a quantity of flowers out of the bag at random, according to this table (some flowers will remain in the bag unused):

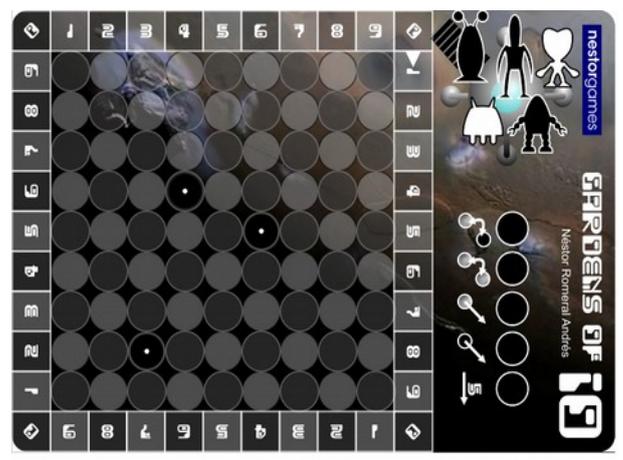
2-player game	27 flowers
3-player game	18 flowers
4-player game	14 flowers
5-player game	11 flowers

Place your flowers grouped by colour in front of you, so that all players can see them.

Determine the starting player by any peaceful means. The game is played in turns in clockwise order (the score track also runs clockwise).

The starting player places a tree on any empty circle of the garden. Then the second player does the same. Then the third player (or first player again in a 2-player game). Trees will block the tossing of seeds beyond their position.

Each player in turn order chooses a type of Martian to be in the game (the colour of the Martian is not relevant) and places one of them on the flying saucer on the board and the other one before her (so everybody knows which one your Martian is).



○ 2	○ 1	○ 3	○ 2	○ 2
● 2	● 2	● 2	● 1	● 2
● 4	● 3	● 0	● 2	● 0
● 1	● 2	● 3	● 3	● 0
● 0	● 2	● 1	● 2	● 3
● 2	● 1	● 2	● 1	● 4

Setup example for 5 players.

HOW TO PLAY

The starting player goes first. Players take turns in clockwise order during the game.

The Martians enter Io on their first turn at the '0' space.

On your turn, you **must** do the following things in order:

1. **Optionally** and only **once** per game, you can use **one** 'special action' that still has a black counter, and thus has not yet been used (take the corresponding black counter and place it in front of you):

Swap the positions of any one tree and any one planted flower.

Swap the positions of any 2 planted flowers.

Move any one planted flower to any other empty space of the garden.

Move any tree to any other empty space of the garden.

Move your Martian forward 5 spaces on the score track.

(You don't score or claim flowers as a result of a special action — except for scoring 5 points with that last one)

2-player exception: Each player can use **2** different special actions during the game (in different turns).

- If there is at least one empty circle on a diagonal or orthogonal line radiating from your Martian's space and the line to it is **not blocked** by a tree, place one of your flowers on any one of those empty circles you wish. If there was no available circle in which to plant a flower then skip to step '4' below as if you had scored 1 point on this turn.
- Count the number of same-colour contiguous flowers that are connected to the one you just planted forming a group, *including that flower*. Only orthogonal connections count — not diagonal. (Note: If no same-colour flowers are connected to the flower you just planted, this number is 1). This number is your score for this turn.
- Move your Martian a number of **empty** spaces forward on the score track equal to your score for this turn (skip spaces with Martians on them, without counting those spaces).

Optional (players must agree on the addition of this rule before the game starts): If your Martian just **completed a lap**, by crossing the start line between 0 and 1 (that is next to the flying saucer), take any one of the flowers already placed on the board except for those of a type that has already been exhausted (all flowers of that type are on the board), and add it to your reserve (a flower has dried out and you've taken a replacement seed from the flying saucer).

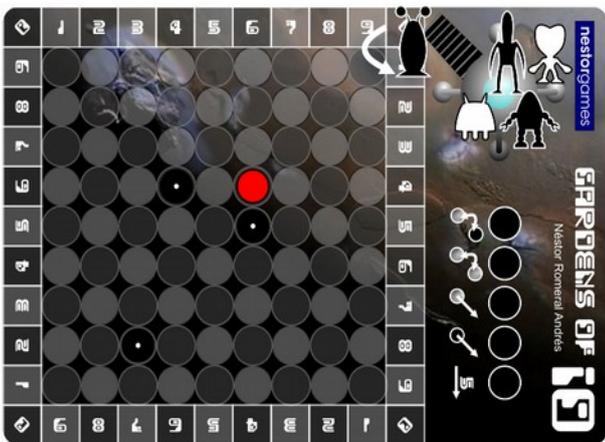
- If you just planted the last of one of the flower types (all flowers of that type are now on the board), you take an **extra turn**.

END OF GAME

If at the end of a player's turn she has **no flowers left** in her reserve, the game ends immediately. The Martian furthest along the scoring track wins the game (laps count)¹.

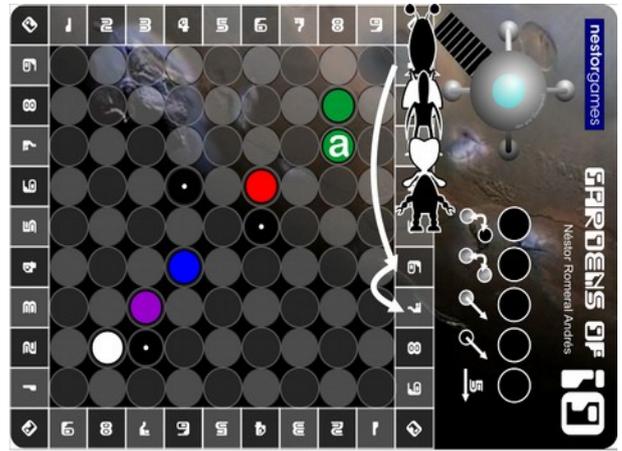
Alternatively, if at any moment during the game the leading player **overtakes** the player in last place, then the game ends immediately and the leading player wins.

EXAMPLES

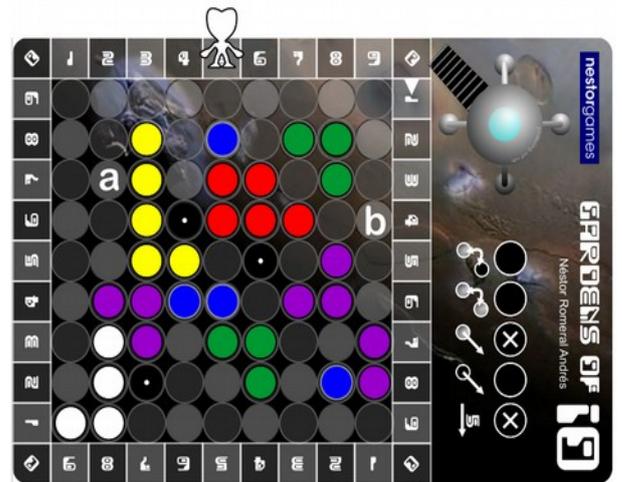


Bob leaves the saucer to space '0', plants a red flower (on the one diagonal radiating from space 0), scores 1 point and moves one space forward.

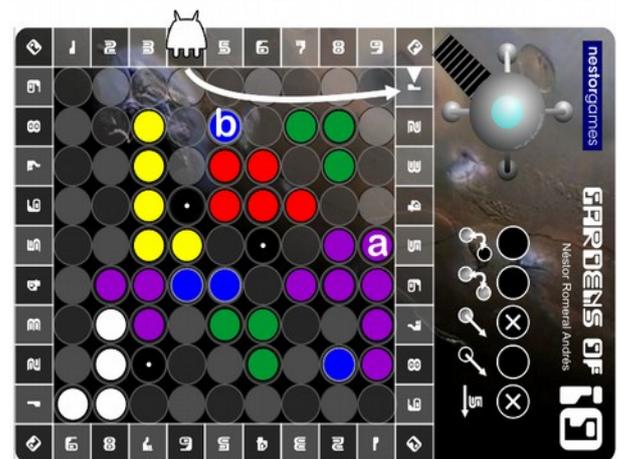
¹ If you wish to know your score use the numbers printed on the track. One lap equals 40 points.



Bob plants a green flower (a) creating a group of 2. Then he moves 2 steps forward, skipping over any martians in his way!



Marty has 9 valid placements and there are 11 groups of flowers. By planting a yellow flower on 'a', he would score 6 points, but by planting a flower (of any type) on 'b' he would only score 1 point, because it is isolated.



Bot plants the last purple flower (a) scoring 7 points, so he moves forward 7 spaces and crosses the start line. Then he takes the blue flower (b). Finally he takes an extra turn (because he's planted the last purple flower).

COOPERATIVE VARIANT (2-5 PLAYERS)

In this variant, the group score is the score of the lowest scoring martian. What is the highest score that you can achieve?

STRATEGY TIPS

Don't read this if you wish to discover the strategies by yourself!

TRIANGULAR SCORING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Gardens of Io uses the same scoring mechanism as Gardens of Mars. I call it 'triangular scoring' and works as follows:

Player A plants a solitary red flower and scores one point. Player B plants a red flower next to it and scores 2. Player C plants a red flower next to them and scores 3. And so on...

So the scores go 1,2,3,4...

If you represent them with a bar graph you'll see they form a triangle:

			D		
		C	D		
	B	C	D		
A	B	C	D		

As you can see, the more you wait to plant a flower on a given colour, the higher the score you'll get. So you want to be the last player planting on each colour!

For example, if you have 6 red flowers and plant them all first, you'll get $1+2+3+4+5+6=21$ points. But if your opponent has only 4 and waits until you've planted yours, she'll get $7+8+9+10=34$ points. With only 4 flowers!

Moreover, the maximum value for the 10th flower of each colour is 10 points. So by just planting the 10th flower on half the colours you'll get 30 points!

But how can I keep my flowers for later? Unfortunately that is not possible (unless you're always blocked by trees) so the key here is to know which flowers to plant first and how. It's not about how many points you can get, but about how many points you can keep your opponents from getting!

How can I keep my opponents from scoring too many points?

Tip 1: If you plant your flowers together, your opponents will make more points planting next to them than if you plant them in distant spots of the board.

Example:

Player A plants two flowers adjacent to each other and scores $1+2=3$. Player B plants two flowers adjacent to them and scores $3+4=7$ points (that's 4 points more than player A).

However, if player A plants them distant enough from each other, he will score $1+1=2$, and player 2 will score $2+3$ at most (by planting her flowers next to one of them). That's 5 points (a difference of 3 points instead of 4).

Tip 2: Surround groups of a given colour with other flowers so that you opponents can't plant adjacent to them.

Tip 3: Try to hold on to the last flower of each colour as long as you can. Don't run out of a colour too soon.

Tip 4: This is harder to achieve, but try to manoeuvre so that your opponents can't plant their last flowers on big groups. Blocking or altering your opponent's plans is more difficult on Io than it is on Mars, but you can still choose whether or not to overtake your opponent (whether you will want to depends on how much you would score at that moment), so your opponent lands on an uncomfortable space afterwards. You can also split groups with a tree by using a special action, if available.

OTHER TIPS

Tip 5: Some players may complain that, due to the triangular scoring, the players going first have a disadvantage. This is not true, as players going first also have a higher chance to plant their last flower first, thereby forcing the endgame with this advantage (the value of the last flower).

Tip 6: Corners are the worst place to be, as your planting options are notably reduced (planting orthogonally is not possible), so try to avoid them at all cost.

Tip 7: Alliances are not forbidden. So you can agree on some movements with other players!

Tip 8: Save the best for last. Crossing the finish line and planting the last flower of a colour are things you definitely need to do if you want to win the game. Focus on those and prevent your opponents from doing the same.

Tip 9: As discussed earlier, not planting a flower on your turn is not a bad thing! Try to corner yourself at least twice and you'll have a lot of firepower for the endgame.