

Paint the Roses

Rulebook

**Don't like reading rules?
Watch the How to Play
video instead.**

In memory of my Dad,
my most dedicated playtester.

From my first roll and moves when I was a child
up through Paint the Roses, which he played hundreds of times.
This game would not have been possible
without his enthusiasm.

— Ben Goldman

"Would you tell me," said Alice, a little timidly, "why you are painting those roses?"

"Why the fact is, you see, Miss, this here ought to have been a red rose-tree, and we put a pink one in by mistake; and if the Queen was to find it out, we should all have our heads cut off, you know." At this moment one of the gardeners, who had been anxiously looking across the garden, called out "The Queen! The Queen!" and the three gardeners instantly threw themselves flat upon their faces. There was a sound of many footsteps, and Alice looked round, eager to see the Queen.

"I see!" said the Queen, who had meanwhile been examining the roses. "Off with their heads!" and the procession moved on, three of the soldiers remaining behind to execute the unfortunate gardeners."

Alice's Adventure in Wonderland
Chapter VIII - The Queen's Croquet-Ground



You and your teammates have been appointed as the new royal gardeners! Your job is to decorate the royal garden in a manner that will please the Queen of Hearts. Unfortunately, the Queen seems to be more interested in removing your heads than having a beautiful garden.

Paint the Roses is a cooperative deduction game where you work together with your teammates to stay one step ahead of the Queen's eager axe.

LEARN THE COMPONENTS

Before we go down the "How to Play" rabbit hole, let's get familiar with the components.

1 GARDEN BOARD

This is the royal garden where you and your teammates will plant Shrubs.

32 SHRUB TILES



Each Shrub tile has 1 of 4 shapes (club, heart, diamond, or spade) and 1 of 4 colors (red, pink, yellow, or purple).



8 of these are starting tiles that have a red back instead of a green back.

1 GARDENING BAG

This luxurious bag holds all of the Shrub tiles, except the starting tiles.

1 GREENHOUSE

On each turn, a Shrub tile will be taken from the Greenhouse and planted in an unoccupied space in the royal garden.



1 GARDENERS

The Gardeners will mark your score on the garden board score track.



1 QUEEN OF HEARTS

The Queen starts behind the Gardeners on the score track.
If she catches up to the Gardeners, it'll be "Off with your heads!"

4 FLOWER TOKENS

The Queen moves faster for each Flower token attached to her.



1 WHITE RABBIT

When the Gardeners pass the White Rabbit, a Flower token is added to the Queen.



WHIM CARDS

Every player will have a hidden Whim card. They show how the Queen would like the shrubs to be planted and how many spaces the players move on the score track when correctly guessed. There are 20 easy cards, 40 medium cards, and 72 hard cards.



30 CLUE TOKENS (6 PER PLAYER)

These tokens are used to give clues about your hidden Whim card.



3 NOTEPADS

You can take notes to help you deduce the Whim cards of the other players.

1 ROYAL LOG

Record your score at the end of each game for posterity's sake. Your names will be fondly remembered for many generations to come.

OBJECTIVE

In Paint the Roses, players work together to finish the royal garden while deciphering the ever-changing preferences of the Queen.

Every player has a hidden Whim card, representing the Queen's preferences. Each turn, players will place a Shrub tile in the royal garden to give clues about these hidden Whim cards. Players cannot talk about their own Whim card, but can freely discuss theories about the other players' cards.

Figuring out these Whim cards moves the Gardeners along the score track, allowing them to stay one step ahead of the Queen's eager axe. Completely fill the royal garden without getting caught by the Queen, and you win the game. Allow the Queen to catch you and the last words you hear will be "Off with your heads!"

SETUP

1. Place the garden board on the table, the Gardeners on space 0 of the score track, the Queen on space 44, and the White Rabbit on the icon between spaces 9 and 10.
2. Give each player 6 Clue tokens of the same color.
3. Place the 4 Flower tokens off to the side.
4. Place the starting Shrub tiles (with a border and red backs) on hexes with the corresponding numbers.
5. Shuffle each of the 3 Whim decks and place them above the board. Every player draws a Whim card from the deck of their choice. Only one player at a time can have an easy Whim card. Keep these Whim cards hidden from the other players.
6. Draw 4 random Shrub tiles from the bag and place them face-up in the Greenhouse.
7. The player who has most recently watered a plant goes first. Give them the Greenhouse to show that they will take the first turn.


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Easy
COLOR TO COLOR
Medium
COLOR TO COLOR
SHAPE TO SHAPE
Hard
COLOR TO COLOR
SHAPE TO SHAPE
COLOR TO SHAPE





HOW TO PLAY

If you have the Greenhouse, it's your turn. You will go through these phases in order.

1. PLACE A TILE

2. PLACE CLUE TOKENS

3. GUESS A WHIM CARD

4. MOVE THE QUEEN

5. REPLENISH



PHASE 1 – PLACE A TILE

Take a Shrub tile from the Greenhouse and place it on any unoccupied space in the garden. This can allow you to reveal clues about your hidden Whim card and sometimes learn about your teammates' Whim cards too.

Each Shrub tile has 2 symbols: a shape and a color.
There are 4 colors: Pink, Red, Purple, and Yellow
and 4 shapes: Spade, Diamond, Club, and Heart



Pink



Red



Purple



Yellow



Spade



Diamond



Club



Heart

PHASE 2 – PLACE CLUE TOKENS

Clue tokens help you decipher the Queen's Whims. When a Shrub tile is placed in the royal garden, every player checks their hidden Whim card. If a symbol on the new Shrub tile and a symbol on an adjacent Shrub tile exactly match a player's Whim card, they put a Clue token on the newly placed tile. Place 1 Clue token for each adjacent Shrub tile that creates a match with the newly placed Shrub tile (see example on page 10).

Clue tokens are always placed on the newly played tile.

TAKING NOTES

The notepads included in the game can help you record what you've learned about a current Whim. We recommend each player to take notes about the Whim card of the player to their right. You may not take notes about your own card.

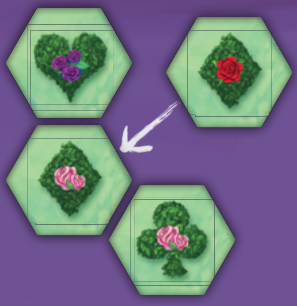
PHASE 2 EXAMPLE – PLACING CLUE TOKENS

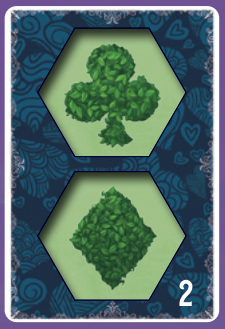
In **Phase 1**, the Green player placed a red diamond Shrub tile adjacent to the three tiles shown. **Phase 2** begins with everyone checking their Whim card.



THE YELLOW PLAYER:

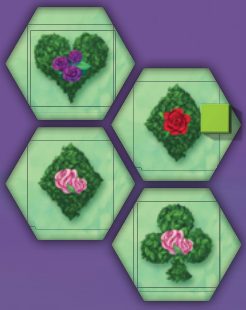
The Yellow player has no matches. Although one of the adjacent shrubs is pink and another adjacent shrub is purple, this is not a match. One of the symbols must be on the newly placed Shrub tile and the other on an adjacent Shrub tile.





THE GREEN PLAYER:

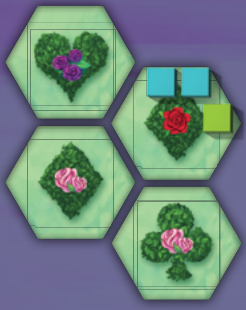
The Green player has a match; the diamond on the newly placed tile and the club on an adjacent tile. They place 1 Clue token on the newly placed tile without indicating which tile satisfies their Whim card.





THE BLUE PLAYER:

The Blue player has 2 matches; the diamond on the newly placed tile and the pink on 2 of the adjacent tiles. They place 2 Clue tokens on the newly placed tile without indicating which tiles satisfied their Whim card.



PHASE 3 – GUESS A WHIM CARD

The team must guess at least one player's Whim during this phase. It can be any players' Whim, including the active player.

Players may discuss other players' Whim cards, but cannot discuss their own. When players are ready to guess a Whim, they must state they are making an official guess. Indicate which players' Whim card is being guessed and the symbols it contains.

A guess is only correct if the team has correctly identified both symbols on a specific player's Whim card.

IF A WHIM CARD IS GUESSED CORRECTLY:

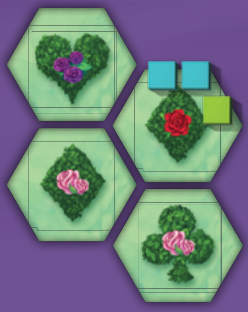
- Advance the Gardeners on the score track the number of spaces indicated on the bottom right of the Whim card that was guessed.
- Return the Clue tokens used for that Whim card back to that player's supply.
- Place the Whim card face-up in the discard pile for that deck.
- If the Gardeners pass the White Rabbit, add 1 Flower token to the Queen and move the White Rabbit forward to the next icon. Remove the White Rabbit from the game once the Queen has all 4 Flower tokens.
- The team has the option to guess another player's Whim card after each successful guess.

IF A WHIM CARD IS GUESSED INCORRECTLY:

- This phase ends immediately. Do not reveal the Whim card, as this is kept secret until accurately guessed.

PHASE 3 EXAMPLE – GUESS A WHIM CARD

This example continues the one on page 10, where a red diamond Shrub tile was played. The team must guess at least 1 Whim card during this phase. Here is what they can deduce about the Blue Player's Hard Whim Card:



- The symbols of the newly played Shrub tile are red and diamond, so one of the symbols on the Whim card must be red or diamond.
- The Blue Player placed 2 Clue tokens, so we know that 2 of the adjacent Shrub tiles match a symbol on their card.
- Two of the adjacent Shrub tiles have pink, so in this example, one of the symbols on the Whim card is pink.
- The other symbol must be on the newly played Shrub tile, so we know the Blue Player's Whim card is either: (1) red and pink or (2) diamond and pink.

In this example, the team has a 50% chance of guessing correctly. After discussion, someone states, "Our official guess is that your card is diamond and pink."

The Blue Player checks their Whim card to see if the guess was correct. It is, so they reveal the Whim card and move the Gardener 4 spaces on the score track.



PHASE 4 – MOVING THE QUEEN

After players have finished guessing Whims, the Queen moves clockwise around the board according to her speed. However, if the team guessed incorrectly in phase 3, the Queen moves double her speed.

If the Queen catches the Gardeners (lands on or passes them), she immediately beheads the Gardeners! Our deepest regrets as you are now dead and the game is over. See the "End of the Game" section.

THE QUEEN'S SPEED

Starting with a movement speed of 1, the Queen's speed will increase as players move around the score track.

Whenever the Gardeners pass the White Rabbit on the score track, a Flower token is added to the Queen. Each Flower permanently increases the Queen's movement speed by 1.



Speed 1 Speed 2 Speed 3 Speed 4 Speed 5

EXAMPLE

The players have 23 points. This means they've passed the White Rabbit on two occasions and added 2 Flower tokens to the Queen. The Queen would move 3 spaces unless the team made an incorrect guess in phase 3, in which case the Queen would move 6 spaces.

PHASE 5 – REPLENISH

If the Queen is now on the same space as the Gardeners or ahead of it, she immediately beheads the gardeners! See the "End of the Game" section.

If you are still ahead of the Queen, go through the following steps before the next player takes their turn:

1. Everyone who needs a new whim card draws one. Note: only one player at the table may have an easy whim card.
2. Draw a random shrub tile from the bag and add it to the greenhouse.
3. Pass the greenhouse to the player on the left. That player is the new active player and will take a turn starting with phase 1.

END OF THE GAME

You and your teammates win if the royal garden is filled without the Gardeners being caught by the Queen.

Note: Players must still complete all phases of a turn, including guessing a Whim and moving the Queen, even on the turn the garden is fully filled.

You and your teammates immediately lose the game if the Queen reaches or passes the Gardeners on the score track. The Queen's cry, "Off with their heads!" is heard around the palace grounds.



"Off with their Heads!"

THE ROYAL LOG

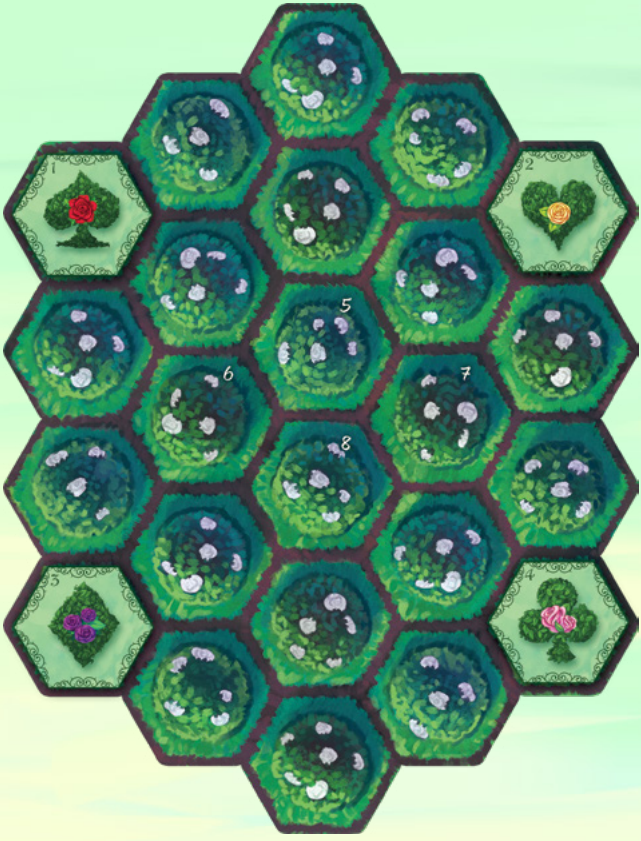
After the game ends, record your score in the Royal Log. Players score points based on the Gardeners' final position on the score track, subtracting 10 points for an unfortunate execution.

TWO-PLAYER RULES

Set up and play the game with the following change: Take 3 Clue tokens of a color you are not using. You may discard one of these tokens to skip the Guess a Whim Card phase this round. If you do this, the Queen will move once as if you guessed correctly but the Gardener will stay still.

EXPERT VARIATION

You can start with a more difficult setup that adds another four turns to the game. Replace step 4 in the setup with the following:
Place 4 starting Shrub tiles (which have red backs) on the board as shown in the image. Shuffle any starting tiles not used into the bag with the rest of the Shrub tiles.



ABOUT WHIM CARDS

Whim cards are separated into 3 different decks: Easy, Medium and Hard. Each card shows the required combination, plus a movement reward for correctly guessing them. Each deck features 2 copies of each combination.

Easy: These cards depict a color adjacent to a color. There are 10 different combinations in total. Correct guesses will move Gardeners 1 or 2 spaces on the score track. The team may only hold one easy Whim card at any time.



Medium: These cards depict a color adjacent to a color, or a shape adjacent to a shape. There are 20 different combinations in total. Correct guesses will move Gardeners 2 or 3 spaces on the score track.



Hard: These cards depict a color adjacent to a color, a shape adjacent to a shape, or a shape adjacent to a color. There are 36 different combinations in total. Correct guesses will move Gardeners 4 or 5 spaces on the score track.



Tip: Hard Whims are only recommended once players are more familiar with the game.

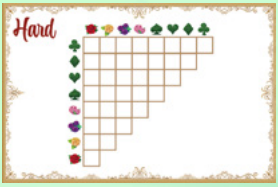
ABOUT NOTE TAKING

You are allowed to take notes about other players' Whim cards, but may not write down anything about your own. Note taking is optional, but we designed 3 different sheets to help solve the more challenging Whims. Players are encouraged to keep notes about current Whims in any way that suits them.

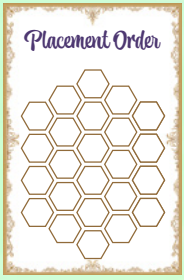
Included in the game are three notepads:



The Medium notepad is designed to help solve medium Whim cards. You'll notice 20 squares on the sheet to indicate the 20 possible combinations that might be found on a medium Whim card.



The Hard notepad is designed to help solve hard Whim cards. You'll notice 36 squares on the sheet to indicate the 36 possible combinations that might be found on a hard Whim card.



The Placement Order notepad features an empty map of the royal gardens. You can use this to number the order that tiles were placed in the garden to help build a history.

When using the Medium or Hard notepads we advise you to use one sheet per Whim card and complete them as follows:



- Mark a cross in the square of any options that are incorrect.
- Mark a circle in the square of any options when you have positive information about a Whim.
- If you have multiple circled spaces, cross these out as they are shown to be incorrect.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What counts as talking about my Whim card?
Avoid influencing players by nodding or commenting on any discussion around your Whim card. You may not ask another player to leave a specific tile in the Greenhouse because that would inadvertently give information about your Whim card. If the information in question is public, such as which tiles have been placed since you drew that card, then you may talk about it. As a general rule, if you aren't sure, just stay quiet.

What if I can't play a tile that satisfies my Whim card?
You still need to choose a tile and place it somewhere, so consider how you might narrow down options for one of your teammate's Whim cards further.

Can we look through the Easy, Medium or Hard discard piles?
No. You can see the top card of each pile, and you can try to remember which cards have been discarded, but you may not look through them to eliminate options.

Can you discard a Whim card without it being guessed?
No. The only way to draw a new Whim card is when your current card is guessed, so be careful which difficulty card you take.

What if players can't agree when guessing a Whim card?
If the team is unable to agree on a guess, the active player determines whose card will be guessed, and the player to the left of them gets the final say about what to guess.

Should players add Clue tokens after drawing a new Whim card?
No, Whim cards are not satisfied retroactively.

Can a newly placed Shrub tile match an adjacent Shrub tile twice for 2 Clue tokens?
No. When checking for matches, a maximum of 1 clue can be added per adjacent tile. For example, if your Whim card depicts red and club, and a newly placed tile featuring a red club is placed next to another tile featuring a red club, it doesn't count twice.

Want to improve your gardening skills?
Check out these quick tips!

CREDITS

GAME DESIGN

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Northstar
Games Studio

PLAYER AID

PHASE 1. PLACE A TILE
Take a Shrub tile from the greenhouse and place it on the board.

PHASE 2. PLACE CLUE TOKENS
Every player checks their Whim card and places clue tokens on the newly placed Shrub tile if their whim card is satisfied.

PHASE 3. GUESS THE WHIM CARDS
Your team must take at least one guess about what is on any player's Whim card.

- **Correct Guess:** move the Gardeners mini forward the number listed on the Whim card. If the Gardeners moved past a white dotted line, move the White Rabbit forward and add a Flower token to the Queen. Your team may guess another card if desired.
- **Incorrect Guess:** this phase immediately ends.

PHASE 4. MOVE THE QUEEN
Move the Queen according to her speed (1 + the number of flower tokens under the Queen). If you made an incorrect guess in phase 3, move the Queen double her speed instead. The game ends immediately if the Queen has caught up to the Gardeners or passed them.

PHASE 5. REPLENISH
If there are no more open spaces in the garden, then you've completed the royal garden and won the game! Otherwise...

- Everyone who needs a new Whim card draws one.
  Note: Only a single player in the group is permitted to have an Easy whim card at any one time.
- Add a new shrub tile to the greenhouse.
- Pass the greenhouse to the player on the left. That player is the new active player

TIP: Taking Hard Whim cards can give you more points, but solving them will cause the Queen to move faster. We advise using these only once you're more familiar with the game.