HOW to PLAY

Autumn Ash

Designed by Greg Lattanzio

🧠 **Medium**	**2** Players 🪑	
⏰ **Medium**		
▲ **Rainbow Stashes**	**x2**	
✚ **Xeno Stashes**	**x2**	

Description
Ash trees present us a wide range of colors every autumn. Leaf watchers in the North American city of Zark have devised a game for the different sized, unusually colored leaves of their native trees. This game is incorporated into their annual raking rituals. It both reflects the impermanence of life and the beauty of its processes.

Objective
Bag "leaves" (aka pyramids) worth a total of over twenty points (21+) before your opponent does.

Set up
Arrange the six pyramids of the first on the 5x6 grid in the pattern on the chart below. One player will play the Xeno colors; the other will play the Rainbow ones.

Remove the remaining trio of both Green and Clear pyramids from the game. To the side, place all of the remaining unplayed pyramids in a manner that allows you to quickly see the next color in order for both players.
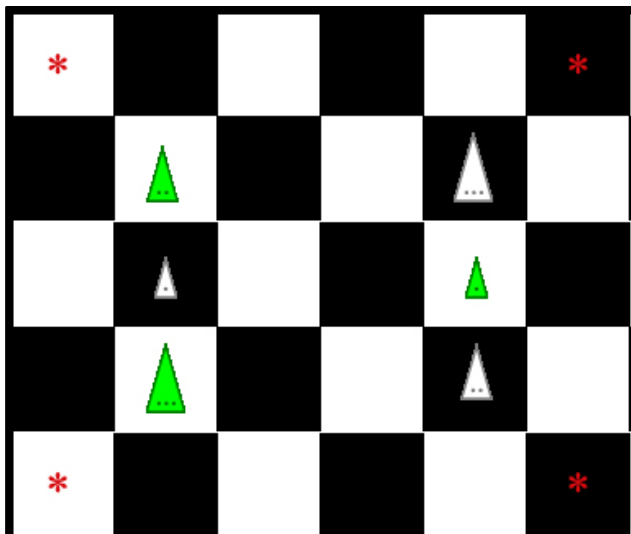
"*" indicates the entry points for new pieces.

The Changing Leaves
Each pyramid represents a leaf, and the order that the "leaves" change for the purposes of the game are as follows.

Rainbow: Green, yellow, red, blue, black

Xeno: Clear, white, orange, cyan, purple

Black and purple pyramids represents a special leaf called a "burnt ash."

Turns

➢ *First*, if you have one, you may place an unplayed piece of your starting color (i.e., green or clear) on one of unoccupied corners.

➢ *Then* move any one of your pyramids in play up to two spaces orthogonally (not necessarily in a straight line). You may move to an empty space or on top of another pyramid if you can legally do so per the stacking and movement rules; you may not skip over an occupied space.

➢ *Upon finishing its move*, a piece changes color and perhaps size. The piece must become the next color in its progression. In most cases, the current player may choose any available sized piece of that color from their stash. Put the old piece back into your unplayed stash area.

➢ *After* a piece moves and changes, if it creates a straight row of three or more pieces of the same color (either diagonally, orthogonally, or vertically), those pieces are removed and scored. These are called "bagged leaves." See section on scoring for rules and limitations.

Bagged leaves are then returned to the play stashes.

Defensive abilities, Stacking, and Special Cases
Unless noted, the blocking and stacking rules apply to a pyramid at the start of its current turn (which includes during its move) and not the piece that it is changed to.

Blocking Powers The top most pyramid on a square has the following blocking purposes.

➢ A pawn repels opposing queen pyramids. This means that no queen can enter the orthogonal spaces beside an opposing pawn. Pawns have no such limitations themselves.

➢ A drone affects opposing drones and queens that are moving toward it (up to one orthogonal square away). The opposing drone only blocks a piece if it is arriving directly in front of it, moving head on (i.e., if it is head on, it is blocked, but a piece may enter the same square from the side; see "Movement Examples").

Stacks and Stacking: A piece cannot capture another piece. However, when it is a legal move, a piece may be placed upon a pyramid.

➤ The blocking rules determine which opposing pieces, at the start of a given turn, can move on to a pyramid. **A queen can be capped by any piece;** (**a drone can be capped by a pawn**; and **a pawn can be capped by a drone or another pawn**. The piece then caps as a pawn.

➤ A piece *always* ends up stacking as a pawn in the next color of progression. If that piece is not in reserve, a piece cannot stack.

➤ During the movement phase, once a player stacks a piece on another, their turn ends. The piece cannot move off of the stack until their next round.

➤ The topmost pawn affects movement. The piece(s) underneath the top stacked (or cap) piece cannot be moved or effect movement while capped, but they still can score.

➤ Whenever bagging leaves affects the contents of a stack, the bagged pieces are removed and the remaining pieces are dropped down to their new configuration.
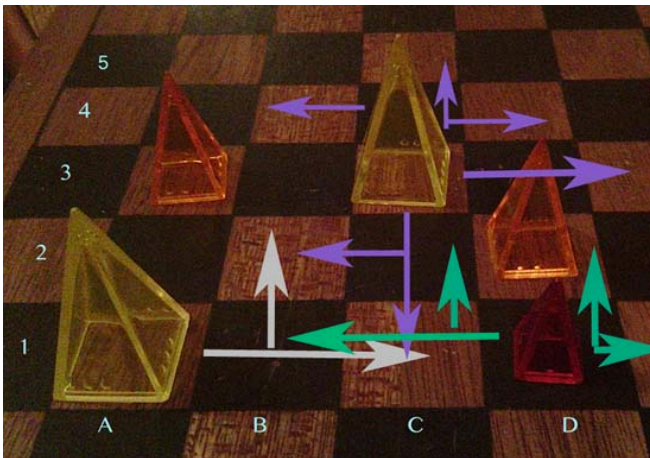
Movement Examples: Movement is the trickiest thing to learn in this game. Once you have the movement restrictions down, the rules on capping will be clear. Here are the options for the Rainbow player. The R Queen at A1 can only move to B1, B2, or C1 (blocked by the opposing drone but not the friendly, red, pawn). The R Queen at C3 can move in front of the X Drone (D2) at C2 or D3 because those moves are not head on. The R Pawn at D1 can move onto the X Drone above it (it would become a blue pawn).

Special Cases:

➤ You must move on your turn. It is illegal to put your opponent in a position where she has no legal moves.

➤ Any piece leaving one of the corner entry squares cannot return to the entry square on the same turn.
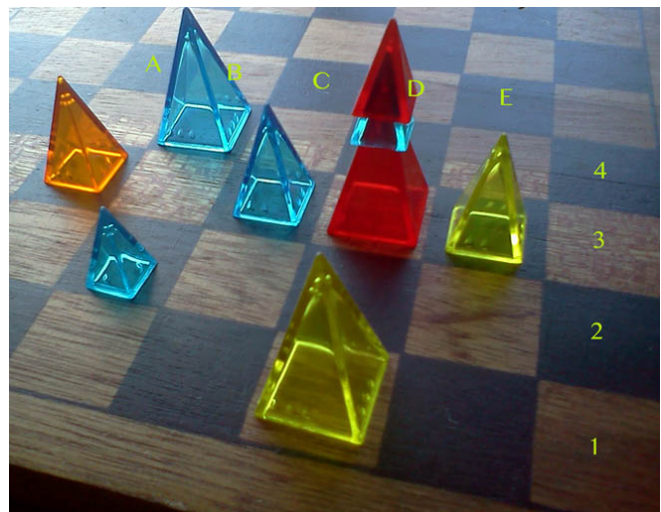
Scoring

➤ Score the bagged leaves by pip count, adding the color bonuses below.

➤ Colored rows score if the line is straight and uninterrupted. If more than one row is created (of three or more pieces each), all of these pieces score as a group.

➤ Pieces are considered in a line for scoring no matter what level they are on (i.e., I could have two pieces of a line on the bottom level and one stacked, and, as long as they lined up uninterrupted, they would score).

➤ Vertical (stacked) lines only require that there be three pyramids of a single color in the stack; any pieces in between do not interrupt the line.

Leaf Colors and Burnt Leaves: A set of bagged leaves scores additional points based on their color. Score one bonus per bagged group (no matter the number of pyramids involved), counting each pyramid only once.

Color Bonuses		
Red and Orange	+	3
Blue and Cyan	+	6
Black and Purple	+	12

If a "leaf" reaches its final stage of progression, its resting spot is signified by a purple or black pyramid. It can still be removed from the game by it being matched with other burnt "leaves" and it still blocks opponent pieces. However, it can never be moved.

Scoring Examples: There are scoring opportunities here for both the Xeno and the Rainbow player. If it is the Xeno player's turn, they may move the drone piece from A3
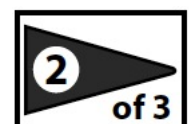
to B3, bagging two lines at once (B3 to D3 and B3 to B4). If it is the Rainbow player's turn, they may move their drone to the stack at D3, when it would become a red pawn and score vertically. The Rainbow player may also stack with the queen at D1. Xeno player could gain up to sixteen points while the Rainbow player can only net eight.

Strategy

It is possible to use pawns and drones together to slow down an opposing player: to either block attempts at scoring or to force players to use pieces of lesser value. Capping is also a very effective way of slowing someone down, but it can be useful in another way too. Placing pieces where your opponent's third pyramid must go diminishes the value of their bagged trio, forcing them to cap with pawns. The fourth defensive tool is the use of the entry points. It may be difficult to control all four indefinitely, but filling them up, at a strategic moment, can be very useful. Of these defensive methods, the use of drones is the most complicated to master. They slow an opponent down relationally, depending on how they are arranged near opposing pieces. However, they do affect two types of pieces and thus may be invaluable to a winning strategy.

While there are many strategic approaches to the game, remember, although it may change sizes, a given piece will move, at the most, four times. The above methods force your opponent to waste moves, change their colors, and thus put their strategy in disarray.

Consider the following: The Xeno player has a number of scoring options and is dominating the board. However, it's the Rainbow player's turn. Her two pieces are well placed on the board, providing her with several options.

If you are in such a position, after placing a piece on one of the three corners, I recommend moving the drone at F5, to cap the piece at E3. This prevents both the Xeno pawn


from moving to C3 and the queen from moving from E1 to E2. Alternatively, the drone, at B4 could be moved to C3, thus forcing the Xeno pawn to cap, limiting the number of points that might be collected from a cyan-colored bag. However, that leaves open the row of orange pieces. The drone at B4 is already strategically placed to keep the Xeno player from moving the drone up from B2 or the Queen from D4 to join the burnt queen at A5. Right now, that piece is probably in its best possible position.

Game Variations

Easy Autumn Ash
The following version of the game is easier to play, and is ideal play with younger players. It may be useful in helping players to learn some of the mechanics of the original their first time through, but it does has some distinct differences.

➢ Set up the pieces per the following diagram
➢ Exclude the blocking rules from the original game.
➢ The capping rules are that a pawn can only be capped by another pawn, a drone can be capped by a drone or pawn, and a queen can be capped by anything.
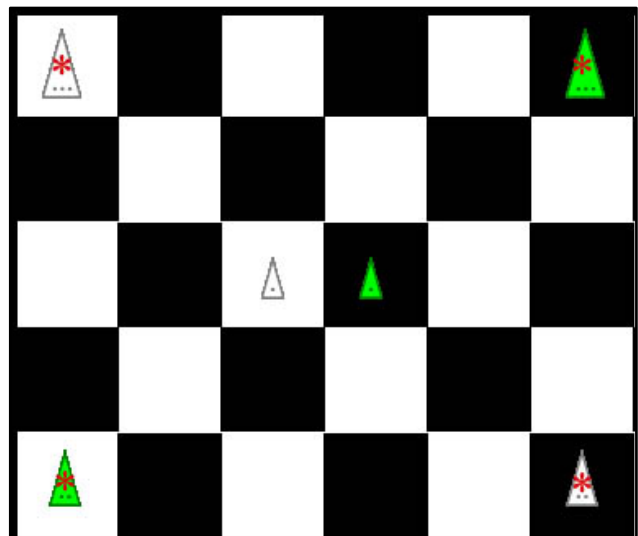
Unsettled Autumn Ash
This advanced version of the game uses the standard rules. However, the game begins on a completely empty chessboard on which the playfield will shift. Any placement and/or move is legal, as long as it can be demonstrated to keep the pieces within a 5X6 rectangle.

At the time a new piece is entered, a given entry point must be able be at a hypothetical corner on a 5X6 grid in relation to three other entry points, occupied or not. All of these entry points must fit within the legal area of play. The game may shift orthogonally around the chessboard, before reaching a generally stable configuration.
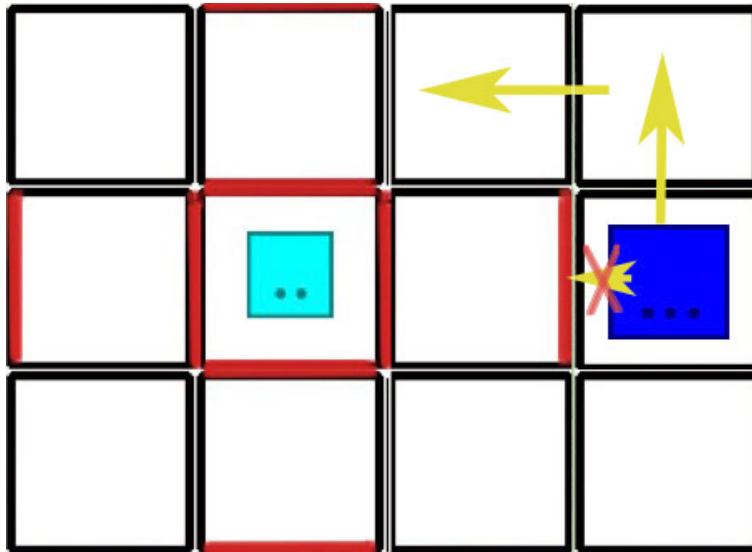
Here is a helpful gameboard, with entry points indicated and areas for your stash provided.

Black

Blue

Red

Yellow

Green

Clear

White

Orange

Cyan

Purple

Blocking Reference Sheets

The cyan drone blocks opposing drones and queens from entering its adjacent orthogonal spaces at the places indicated in red. Note that, once there, a queen or a drone may move away from the adjacent squares in any direction (expect by moving onto the drone).

The blue queen may, for example, follow the route indicated by the yellow arrows, but it may not move directly to the left (as indicated).
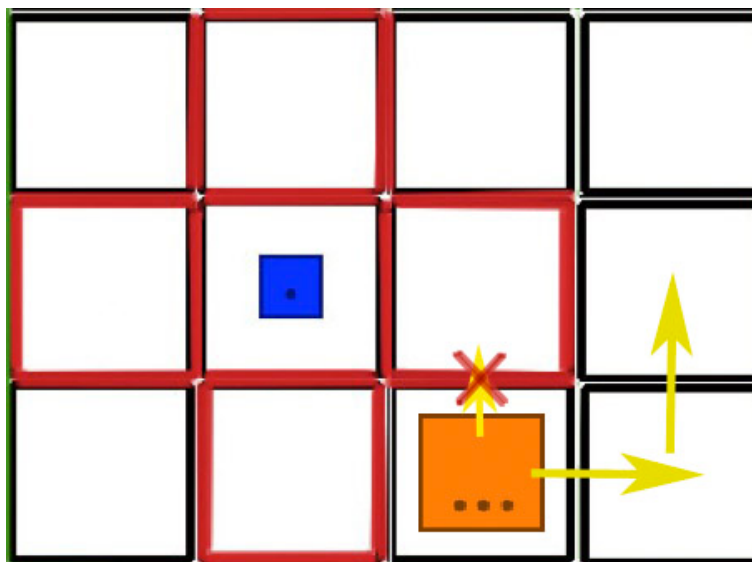
The blue pawn blocks all opposing queens from entering the adjacent orthogonally spaces. Note that, once there, a queen may move away from the adjacent squares in any direction (expect by moving onto the pawn).

The orange queen may, for example, follow the route indicated by the yellow arrows, but it may not move into a space adjacent to the pawn (as indicated).

*Thanks to the Playtesters