

Night Grain

A game by Greg Costikyan

<http://playthisthing.com/night-grain>

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Backstory

Persephone grants both the humans and the elves access to her sacred store of grain. Naturally, bloodshed between the two races is forbidden, but they compete in peaceful ways for the available grain. Humans work her sacred silos during the day, and the elves at night.

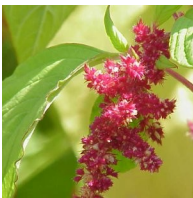
Basics

Night Grain is a game for 4 or 6 players (there must be an even number). At the end of the game, each player's score depends on what grain he has received from Persephone. Each player belongs to one of two teams -- the Elves and the Humans; there is both a single "personal score" winner and a group "team" winner. Which of these two types of "win" you prize more highly is a matter of personal preference. However, players will find that achieving a high personal score is difficult without the cooperation of their team mates.

Components

A complete set of *Night Grain* consists of these rules; three sun and three moon markers to designate the opposing teams; twenty-four grain markers (four each of six different types); and the Track of Persephone, divided into five numbered levels. Accompanying this document is a jpg with marker images suitable for printing; I recommend printing on a color printer, then spray-mounting to light cardstock and cutting the markers apart with a scissors. There is also a pdf with the board image, which may be printed out. In addition, you will need a single die.

Grain Markers



Amaranth



Barley



Buckwheat



Rye

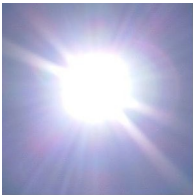


Spelt



Wheat

Team Markers



Sun marker



Moon marker

Setting Up for Play

Divide the players into two teams by any reasonable method. Seat the players around the board alternately --that is, Human, Elf, Human, Elf, etc. Give each Human player a Sun marker, and each Elf player a Moon marker, to make it easier to remember which team each player is on.

In a four player game, only four types of grain are used; place the grain markers for two types aside. In a six player game, all are used. Place the board in the center of the table and the grain markers to be used nearby.

Place the die on the table, with the "2" showing.

Select a starting player by any reasonable method.

Taking a Turn

When it is your turn, you first may, at your option, adjust the die to increase or decrease the number shown by one (e.g., if the die is currently set at "2," you could turn it to "1" or "3" -- or leave it at "2"). The die may never be set to "6" however -- that is, the allowable numbers are 1 through 5.

Then, you must take as many actions as the number now shown on the die. The only circumstance under which you may take fewer actions is if one of your actions causes the game to end.

These are the allowable actions:

Place a New Grain Marker in the "5" Box on Persephone's Track

Take one of the grain markers that has not yet entered play, and place it on the board in the "5" box.

Move a Grain Marker Down the Track by One Box

You can move a marker that is already on Persphone's Track down it by one box (e.g., from the "5" box to the "4" box).

Take a Grain Marker from the "1" Box

If a grain marker is in the "1" box on Persephone's Track, you may, as one action, move it "down" to the receiving area, and take it, placing the marker in front of you. It will contribute to your score at the end of the game.

Two Actions to Move a Grain Marker *Up* the Track by One Box

In addition, you can move grain markers *up* the track (e.g., from the "4" box to the "5" box), but this costs you two actions per box moved. Grain markers in the "5" box cannot be removed from the track in this fashion, however.

Note that you can "mix and match" actions. For example, if you have three actions, you could place three new grain markers on the track; or place one and move it two boxes; or move one marker up one box and another marker down one box, etc.

When one player has finished a turn, play passes to the next player clockwise around the table. The game continues until all grain markers have been received by the players.

Scoring the Game and Winning

When the last game marker has been received, scores are determined.

Each player examines the grain markers he has received. For each type of grain he possesses, he gains a number of points that depends on how many markers of that type he has received, according to this table:

Number of same grain type	Score
1	1
2	3
3	6
4	10

Example: A player has 3 buckwheat, 2 wheat, and 1 amaranth. His buckwheat scores him 6 points; his wheat, 3 points; and his amaranth 1 point, for a total of 10 points.

Personal Victory

The player with the highest score is the "personal winner." If two or more are tied, the game is a "personal draw" among them.

Team Victory

To determine a team's score, simply add up the scores of the individual team members. The team (Human or Elf) with the larger score is the "team winner." If the scores are equal, the game is a "team draw".