# Bug Council of Backyardia

In the vast realm of Backyardia, the Bug Council convenes to discuss important things like picnics, how to ruin picnics and, of course, income tax reform. The different factions of bugs- ants, flies, bees, mosquitoes and cockroaches- find themselves in an ever-shifting balance of power and only those who ally themselves with the most powerful will seize the day.

Bug Council of Backyardia is a trick taking game that uses a mancala mechanism to dynamically change the strengths of the suits throughout the game. Players will play tricks, keeping an eye on which suits are most powerful, until they have one card left. If their remaining card is of one of the stronger suits, they earn themselves a nice bonus to add to the tricks they've won!

Contents

Age Tracker

Lead Player Marker

5 Allegiance Banners

5 Scoring Markers

60 Playing Cards (1 - 12 of 5 Factions)

1	1	1	1	1
Ants	Bees	Cockroaches	Flies	Mosquitos

Cube Bag

5 Council Member Cards

10 Declaration Cards

18 Strength Cubes

Council Board
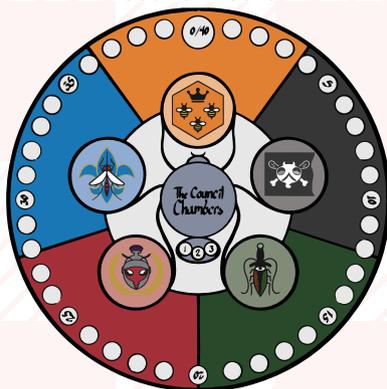
Card & Board Anatomy

Faction Crest

Value

Illustration

Scoring Track

Faction Spaces

Council Chambers

Age Track

1
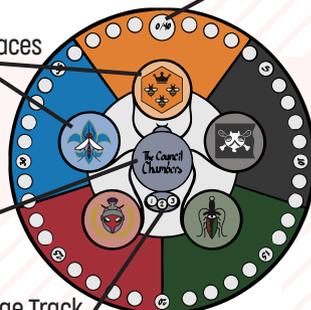
Setup

1. Place the Council Board on the table so that it is easily visible and within reach of all players

2. Place the Age Marker on the 1st space of the Age Track

3. Each Player selects a color and receives the corresponding Scoring Marker, Allegiance Banner, & 1 of each type of Declaration Cards. Place the Scoring Marker onto the 0/40 space of the Scoring Track and place the Allegiance Banner upright in front of you. Keep the Declaration cards handy

4. Perform the initial Council setup as follows:

> **4.1** Take the 5 Council Member Cards and shuffle them face-down
>
> **4.2** Flip over the top Council Member Card. Take 4 strength cubes from the bag and place them onto the corresponding Council Space on the Council Board
>
> **4.3** Repeat step 4.2, placing 3 strength cubes on the corresponding Council Space, then again, placing 2 strength cubes on corresponding Council Space, then finally, placing 1 strength cube on the corresponding Council Space
>
> *Note that one faction will start with 0 cubes*
>
> **4.4** Take all Council Member Cards and simply discard them back to the box
>
> **4.5** All remaining cubes are kept in the bag and the bag is set to the side for later use

5. Setup the Playing Card deck based off the number of players:

> In a 5 player game: Use all 60 Playing cards.
>
> In a 4 player game: Return all cards with a 5+ symbol (12s of each faction) to the game box
>
> In a 3 Player game: Return all cards with a 4+ & with a 5+ symbol (11s and 12s of each faction) to the game box

6. Shuffle the remaining deck and deal 11 cards face-down to each player. This will form their hand. Players may look at their hand but should keep it secret from the others. Any remaining cards are placed in a face-down pile to the side. These will be used in later rounds.

7. The Lead Player Marker is given to last person to have a picnic ruined by bugs. Otherwise, choose randomly which player will receive this.

Sample Setup (3 players)

4   3   2   1   0
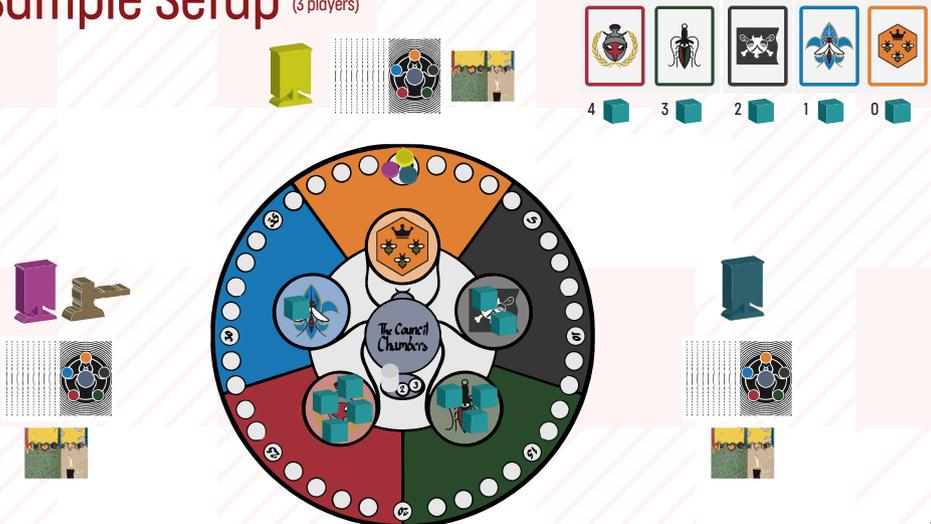
Age Structure

Bug Council of Backyardia is played over the course of three Ages (rounds). Ages are broken up into three phases:

Declaration Phase   ·   **Trick Phase**   ·   **Scoring & Upkeep Phase**

Declaration Phase

In this phase, players will look at their hand of 11 cards and secretly decide if they will declare *No Allegiance.* Using their 2 Declaration Cards, each player will place the appropriate one face-down in front of them, leaving the other one face-down to the side.

Allegiance

No Allegiance

Once all players are ready, players will simultaneously reveal their selected Declaration card.

Anyone who declares *No Allegiance* tips over their Allegiance Banner so that it is no longer upright and chooses one card from their hand to discard face-up. Place the discarded card beside the leftover deck.

Multiple players can declare *No Allegiance*. This concept and why it's important will become relevant during the Scoring and Upkeep Phase.

Trick Phase

In this phase, players will play 10 tricks. Each trick is broken up into three parts: Playing the Trick, Resolving the Trick, and Visiting the Council.

Playing the Trick

1. The lead player begins the trick by playing any card from their hand. Whatever suit they play is called the 'lead suit'.

2. Going clockwise from the lead player, each player must then play a card from their hand. If a player has a card in the same suit as the lead suit, they MUST play a card of that suit. That is called 'following suit' and their card is considered 'on suit'. If a player does NOT have a card in the same suit as the lead suit, they may play any card from their hand.

Resolving the Trick

If all players followed suit, the player who played the card with the highest value wins the trick.

If suits different from the lead suit have been played, the player who played the card with **the highest value of the strongest suit wins the trick.** The strongest suit is determined by which suit has the highest number of strength cubes on its respective Council Space.

Example: Rufus leads the trick with a 5 of Ants. Lizzy has a 7 of Ants, so they follow suit and play the card. Dingus does NOT have an Ants card, so they play a 2 of Bees. Ellie is last in turn order and they also do not have an Ants card, so they play a 4 of Cockroaches. The winner of this trick must be determined by comparing suit strengths at the Council. Currently, the Ants space has 2 cubes on it, Bees have 4 and Cockroaches have 1. This means the Bees suit is the strongest suit, and even though Dingus only played a 2, they win the trick because it's the highest value card of the strongest suit.

Rufus

Lizzy

Ellie

Dingus
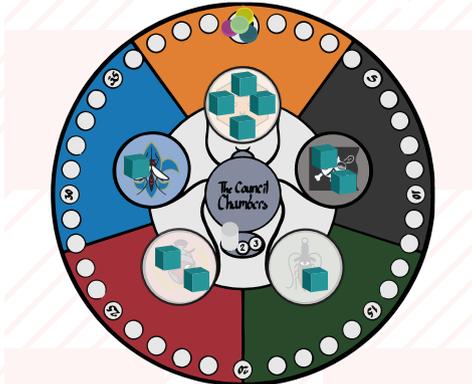
IMPORTANT: If two suits are tied for the highest number of strength cubes, the **higher value** card played wins. If both cards in question are of the same value, the player who played their card **later** in turn order wins.

Whoever wins the trick takes the lead player marker, gathers all cards played during this trick, and places them to the side in a way that notes how many tricks they've won. Before gathering the cards, be sure to take mental note of who played the lowest on-suit card, as this will be important in the upcoming and final step of the Trick Phase.

Visiting the Council

Finally, the player who played the lowest valued 'on suit' card during the current trick will Visit the Council.

Important: If nobody followed suit, thus making the leader of the trick the only person who played 'on suit', then nobody visits the Council!

When a player visits the Council, they will choose **any** faction space to activate. When they've chosen a faction space, they pick up all the strength cubes on that space and then move in a clockwise direction around the council, dropping **one** cube off on each space as they go.

Once all cubes have been dispersed from the original space in this manner, the player has finished their visit to the Council and play goes back to the start of the Trick Phase with the Lead Player beginning a new trick.

IMPORTANT: If a player visits the Council and activates a faction space that has so many cubes (5 or more) on it that they complete a full revolution around the Council, they drop a cube on the faction space they initially activated and put ALL excess cubes into the Council Chambers. *All cubes put into the Council Chambers will stay there permanently for the rest of the game.*

Example: Rufus played the lowest on suit card, so they get to visit the Council. Rufus decides to activate the Bees faction space, which has 7 cubes on it. They pick up the cubes and go in a clockwise motion, dropping 1 cube on the Flies, Cockroaches, Ants and Mosquitos spaces. At this point Rufus has made a full revolution around the Council and is back at the Bees space, so they drop 1 cube off at the Bees space and place the remaining 2 cubes into the Council Chambers.
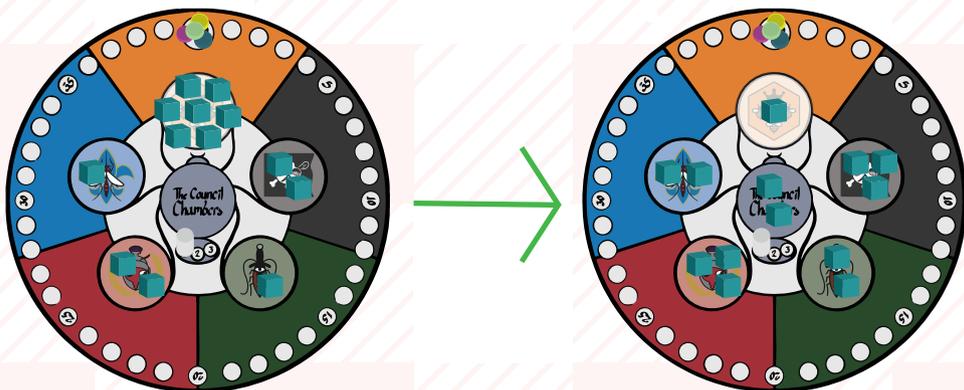
Important: You do NOT have to activate the faction space of the suit you played. You may activate any faction space you wish, but you must choose one that has 1 or more cubes on it.

Also important: If nobody is eligible to visit the Council, this part is skipped and play goes back to the start of the Trick Phase by beginning a new trick.

Once players have played 10 tricks, the Trick Phase ends and play moves onto the Scoring and Upkeep Phase.

Scoring & Upkeep Phase

During this phase, players score points and perform some upkeep to prepare for the next Age.

Scoring

Tricks are worth one point each. Players may also score bonus points depending on the leftover card in their hand.

Simultaneously, players reveal the leftover card in their hand (the one that wasn't played during the Trick Phase). The suit of this card is their 'allegiance' for this Age. Players look at the faction space corresponding to their allegiance to see how many strength cubes are on it. Players receive 1 point for every cube present on their allied faction's space.

If a player declared *No Allegiance* at the start of the Age (and therefore has no card leftover), they score differently. If someone who declared *No Allegiance* won any tricks at all, they simply score 1 point per trick for that Age. However, if they successfully finished the age with **ZERO** tricks won, they receive 10 points PLUS 1 point per cube in the Council Chambers. If there are multiple players who chose *No Allegiance* and successfully finished the age with **ZERO** tricks won, this score is split evenly among them (rounded up). Therefore, the more players who vie for No Allegiance, the less valuable it becomes!

Players move their respective Scoring Markers up the scoring track equal to the number of combined points received from their tricks and their allegiance bonus. If there is ever more than 1 Scoring Marker on the same space of the Scoring Track, simply stack these on top of each other (the order in which they are stacked does not matter).

Example: At the beginning of the Scoring and Upkeep phase, the Council looks like this: 4 cubes on Ants, 2 cubes on both Bees and Cockroaches, 1 cube on Flies, and 1 cube in the Council Chambers.

Dingus won 4 tricks and has an Ants card as their allegiance, so Dingus gains 8 points (4 for tricks + 4 for Allegiance bonus). Lizzy won 2 tricks and has Flies as their allegiance so Lizzy gains 3 points (2 for tricks + 1 for Allegiance bonus). Rufus won 4 tricks and has the Cockroaches as their allegiance so Rufus gains 6 points (4 for tricks and 2 for Allegiance bonus). Ellie declared "No Allegiance" at the start of the Age and won 0 tricks so Ellie gains 11 points (10 points for successful No Allegiance + 1 for the Council Chambers bonus).
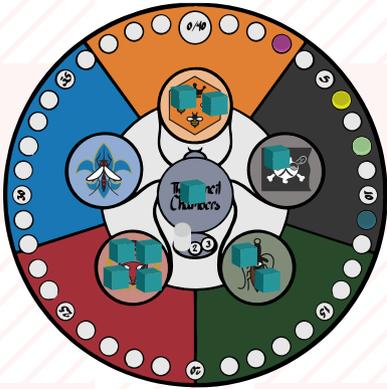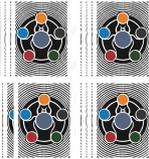
Dingus   4   +   4 = 8   Lizzy   2   +   1 = 3

Ellie   10   +   1 = 11   Rufus   4   +   2 = 6
    ZERO Tricks   Council Chambers Bonus
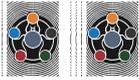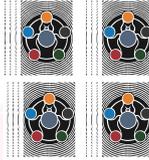
Upkeep

After all players receive their points, New Recruits will be added to certain faction spaces. All faction spaces **EXCEPT** for the faction with the most strength cubes present on it gain one extra strength cube from the bag. These cubes represent allies coming from afar to help their faction in the coming conflicts.

Important: If multiple spaces are tied for the most strength cubes, none of those tied spaces receive this extra cube.

Example: If there are 4 cubes on both Ants and Mosquitoes, 2 cubes on both Bees and Cockroaches, and 1 cube on Flies, then the Bees, Cockroaches and Flies all receive 1 extra cube from the bag. The Ants and Mosquitos don't receive cubes since they are tied for most strength.

After the New Recruits have been added, shuffle up all the cards to form a new deck (as in the initial setup). Move the Age marker to the next spot on the Age Track and deal out 11 cards to each player. The next Age will now begin with a new Declaration Phase.

The player with the lead player marker will play the first card of the next Trick Phase.

End of the Game

The game ends after 3 Ages have been played. After the third and final Age, the player with the most points wins! If there is a tie, the player who scored the most points in the 3rd and final Age wins. If there is still a tie, the tied players share the victory!

2 Player Changes

Bug Council of Backyardia can be enjoyed by 2 players with the addition of a neutral player known as the Emissary.

Setup exactly as if it were a 3 player game, with the following changes:

> 1. In addition to the Player's selected Scoring Markers, place a non-selected color Scoring Marker at space 0/40 of the scoring track.
> 2. After dealing 11 cards to each player, place the remaining deck face-down between both players. This deck will be used as the Emissary's hand.
> 3. Draw the top 2 cards from the deck and place them face-up in front of the deck. These 2 cards represent the Emissary's available options.

The game is played as normal with the following exceptions:

Trick Phase

The player with the Lead Player Marker plays a card from their hand **and then** plays a card for the Emissary. They may play either of the two face-up cards in front of the deck, but as with any player, the Emissary **MUST** follow suit if they're able to.

If the Emissary wins the trick, take the cards won in the trick and place them near the deck in a way that notes how many tricks the Emissary has won. Place the Lead Player Marker near the Emissary Deck. The Emissary will then lead the next trick, **controlled by the player who followed** during the previous trick. This player will then follow by playing a card from their hand, and finally their opponent will follow.

Important: If the Emissary wins the trick as the Lead Player, the Lead Player Marker remains with the Emissary and **the player who controls the Emissary remains the same.**

If the Emissary must visit the council, activate the faction space corresponding to the faction card that THEY played in that trick. If there are no cubes on the corresponding faction space, then no cubes will be moved during the Emissary's visit.

Before beginning the next trick, take the top card from the Emissary Deck and place it face up in front of the deck.

Example: Dingus is the current Lead Player, they lead with a 4 of Ants. The Emissary has a 10 of Ants and a 5 of Flies face-up on their board, so Dingus must follow-suit with the Emissary. Dingus takes the 10 of Ants and plays it into the trick. Finally, Lizzy plays a 3 of Ants. The Emissary has won the trick! Take the 3 cards played in the trick and set these near the Emissary Deck. As usual, Lizzy visits the Council since they played the lowest on-suit card. Meanwhile, Dingus takes the Lead Player Marker and places it near the Emissary Deck. Lastly, draw a new card from the Emissary Deck and place it face-up in front of the deck.

It is now time for the next trick! Since Lizzy followed on the previous trick, they will **first** choose one of the Emissary's 2 cards to lead with. Lizzy will then play a card from their hand (following suit if possible), and finally Dingus will do the same. Let's say the Emissary wins again (they are really on a roll)! The Lead Player Marker remains where it is, and Lizzy once again leads with the Emissary as in the previous trick.

The Emissary will score points as if they were a normal player. 1 point per trick, and 1 point for each strength cube on their corresponding allegiance - Their allegiance is determined by the leftover card at the end of the 10 tricks. **If the Emissary won 0 tricks, they have successfully completed No Allegiance for the round and they receive the corresponding bonus instead (10 points plus 1 point per strength cube currently on the central Council Chambers space).**

Move the Emissary's Score Marker up a number of spaces on the Scoring Track equal to the number of points they have earned during this Age.

As in the standard rules, players play 3 rounds. Whoever (including the Emissary) has the most points wins!

Solo Mode

In the solitaire mode of *Bug Council of Backyardia*, you'll be facing off head-to-head against the Emissary, themself! They will adjust their strategy on the fly (no pun intended) using a clever and dynamic automa system that is designed to replicate the agency and the decision making of a real-life opponent!

Note: this mode is still in development. More details will be released during the Kickstarter Campaign.