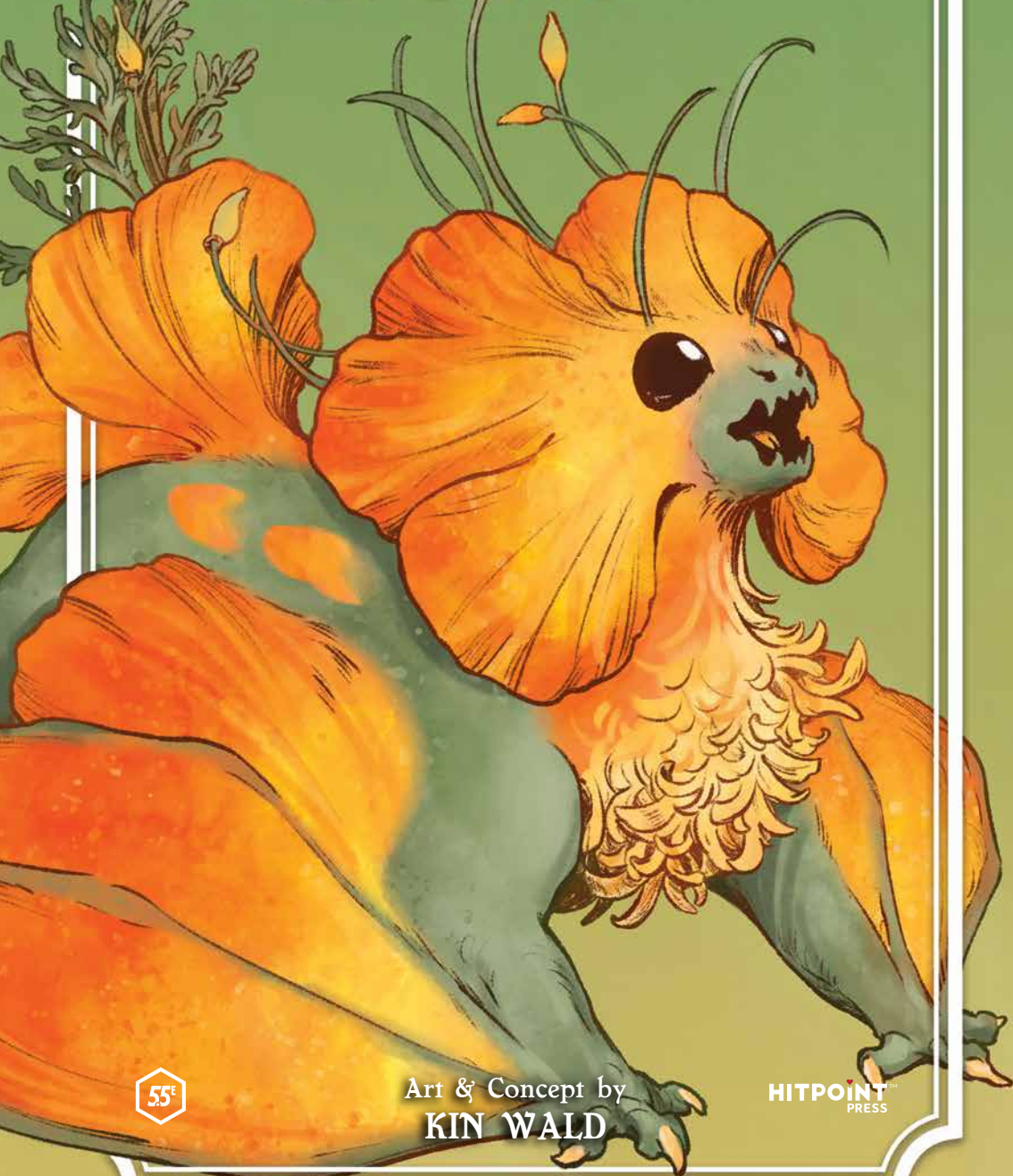


FLORAL DRAGONS



55€

Art & Concept by
KIN WALD

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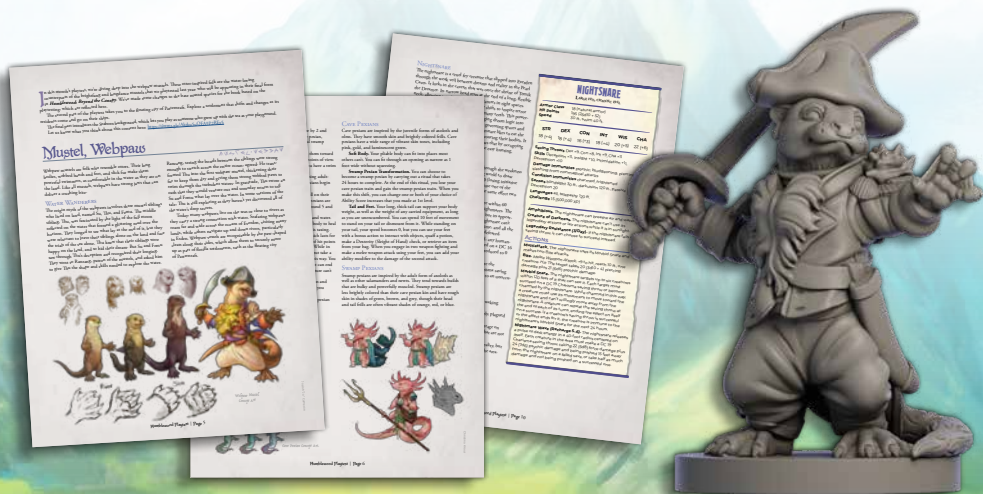
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Bamboo Dragon

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Tiny | ☐ Large |
| ☐ Small | ☒ Huge |
| ☐ Medium | ☐ Gargantuan |

HOW THE BAMBOO SPLIT

This is a legend from the isle of Loxotha, where bamboo grows thick and tall. Long ago, there was a bamboo dragon named Poac, but he was not like the dragons we know today. He had no legs and slithered on the ground like a snake. Poac was an impatient creature, eager to eat, to investigate, to explore. The problem was there were too many exciting options! Should Poac slither over to the stream and take a drink, or forage for fresh bamboo shoots, or play with the panda cubs, or investigate the funny sound over by the cliffside?

Poac strained, turning this way and that, until they tore themselves apart. Their neck split in two, a head growing at the end of each flexible stalk. Rearing up on newly grown legs, Poac dashed off, ready to experience more and more of the world with each new head he grew. But having two heads was not as helpful as Poac had thought. They bickered and argued, tangling up the shared legs as they each tried to follow their desires. Unable to compromise between the two heads, Poac split again, and again, and again, until he had six squabbling heads!

He lay in the dust, wiggling unhappily, unable to make a decision. That is where the goddess Ghardinn found him. She scooped up Poac and stroked each of his heads, bringing them back into alignment. Poac's arguing minds coalesced back into one. The dragon bowed to the goddess, embarrassed and asked what he could do to thank her. Seeing that the young dragon needed direction lest he start splitting once more, Ghardinn took pity on him. She laid a quest upon Poac, guard this forest and all who live within it. From that day, bamboo dragons have had many heads, but one goal.

PHYSIOLOGY

Bamboo dragons begin life as squat, soft, limbless wyrmlings. As they grow into adolescence their bodies lengthen and harden into a slender, snake-like form. First four, then six, and finally eight legs emerge from their trunks. Finally, a bamboo dragon matures into an adult when their neck splits and develops a second head. This maturation process is remarkably rapid, with a wyrmling becoming an adult in a matter of weeks. An attentive watcher can see a young bamboo dragon growing a few inches over the course of an hour.

Bamboo dragons live for around 150 years. Adults continue to develop new heads through their life, though at a slower pace. A dragon's heads all share a single consciousness, and they speak in a harmonic chorus with a distinctive whistling sound.

Though most bamboo dragons are light green with purple haunches, some individuals are brown, yellow, white, or dark green. Their light bodies are hollow, yet incredibly strong. This allows them to gallop at great speed once they develop legs. There are reports of bamboo dragons surviving devastating fires and magical disasters. Even if a grove is raised to the ground, bamboo wyrmlings emerge soon after to stimulate regrowth of the forest.

This was the perfect place to come for my research into bamboo dragons. The Notho bamboo forest is so large that it sustains dragons at all stages of their life cycle. On my first day here, I met a wyrmling, freshly emerged from the ground. I'm not sure if it grew from seed or is an off-shoot of an adult dragon.

(Note to self: conduct a survey into whether clones are more similar in personality to their parents than seeded dragons or not.) The wyrmling couldn't speak yet, but sniffed at my boots before slithering away rapidly. Perhaps it can smell the scent of other floral dragons on me. It was foolish of me not to wash off the soil from my travels.

Fig. 1 A Bamboo wyrmling recently emerged from the ground. Note the lack of limbs and single head.



Fig. 2 A young bamboo dragon and a bamboo cutter sharing a joke.



The relationships between the people harvesting the bamboo and the dragons are far friendlier than I had expected. With the bamboo dragons' reputation as a fierce defender of their territory, I thought they would resent and oppose forestry.

Instead, the dragons are actively helpful, moving equipment, supporting the growth of new bamboo, and interacting positively with humanoids. A forester named Lun explained that he thinks of the dragons as colleagues and even friends. I saw several dragons eating young bamboo sprouts that had grown where a stand of old bamboo had been harvested. The dragons prefer fresh growth, it seems.

HABITAT

Bamboo dragons are found in tropical and subtropical climates. Most avoid areas with a risk of frost as cold causes them discomfort, though a few hardy individuals have adapted to endure freezing temperatures. They exclusively live in groves of bamboo, which provide them food and camouflage. Despite their fearsome fanged appearance, these vegetarian dragons only eat bamboo. An exceptionally large bamboo forest can support several dragons thanks to its rapid rate of growth. Conflict between them only arises if there isn't enough bamboo for them all to eat.

While bamboo dragons have not been truly domesticated, they happily inhabit cultivated bamboo groves as well as wild ones. Having a dragon protecting a forest is a great boon to farmers as a dragon's presence magically encourages healthy bamboo growth. Bamboo dragons are not aggressive toward humanoids as long as they harvest bamboo sustainably.

When removed from their natural habitat, bamboo dragons become wildly aggressive. Without a source of food, they begin to prey on other floral dragons, though this sickens them over time. Only transplanting a dragon into a bamboo forest can settle it.

BEHAVIOR

Bamboo dragons reproduce in two ways. Most commonly, their tails drop off and burrow into the ground. This rhizome-like stump develops rapidly into a new bamboo wyrmling who is essentially a clone of its parent. Once every century, bamboo dragons who are all the same age flower, releasing clouds of pollen that drift in the wind to find other blooming bamboo dragons. The trigger for this mass flowering is unknown even to the dragons, who speak only of a "feeling that the time is right."

Blossoming is the one time bamboo dragons migrate. Flowering bamboo dragons leave their groves and are driven to seek out others of their kind. After a successful pollination, a bamboo dragon produces dozens of seed-like eggs. They wander far and wide, planting their eggs before slowly withering and dying. Bamboo wyrmlings emerge from the ground a few weeks after being planted as long as the soil is wet enough.

Bamboo dragons play no role in raising their young. However, bamboo wyrmlings are docile and friendly creatures, often seeking out the companionship of humanoids and other animals. Wyrmlings bond with whatever friendly creatures they grow up around, and a strong protective instinct asserts itself around the time they grow their second head.

Adult dragons guard not only their forests but all the local creatures, such as pandas, rats, elephants, and lemurs. Bamboo dragons rarely welcome other species of floral dragon as their presence interferes with their ambient magic that helps bamboo to grow. When threatened, a bamboo dragon strikes hard and fast with no warning, hoping to deter invaders from future incursions. An enraged dragon rarely ventures far beyond the edge of their grove, retreating once they are satisfied any threat has been scared off. However, this does not mean they are content to remain stationary all their lives. Wild bamboo dragons expand their territory by encouraging the expansion of their forests. Luckily for humanoids working alongside friendly bamboo dragons, this instinct is satisfied by any sufficiently abundant bamboo growth, even if it is then harvested for food, building materials, and other uses.

After several peaceful weeks, I finally saw a bamboo dragon in a frenzy. They caught a couple of other floral dragons sniffling around their forest. With no warning, the dragon reared up and began attacking with all five heads and its powerful legs. I had to dive out of the way to avoid being swiped by their tail.

Lun warned me not to get close to the bamboo dragon until it had calmed down because they can't always tell friend from foe when they are in a rage. This dramatic reaction to other floral dragons may be an issue if we want to bring bamboo dragons east to Faxan and create bamboo forests there. The local species would not be happy!



Fig. 3 An adult bamboo dragon chasing off rival floral dragons.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Use the Bamboo Dragon Personality Traits and Bamboo Dragon Motivations tables to create original bamboo dragons.

Bamboo Dragon Personality Traits

D8	TRAIT
1	I am on the verge of adulthood and my protective urges are running wild.
2	My heads all move in perfect unison.
3	After a fire almost destroyed my home I am overly protective of my forest.
4	I can't sit still. Movement is life.
5	I love music, tapping my hooves on rocks and whistling.
6	I often tangle up my newly grown heads.
7	I am very curious and must investigate anything new in my grove.
8	I don't trust humanoids because I've seen them poach the animals from my forest.

MOTIVATIONS

Bamboo Dragon Motivations

D6	MOTIVATION
1	Nothing will harm my forest while I live.
2	I am interested in the ways humanoids use bamboo and want to help with the harvest.
3	I can feel my flowering is near. I must unburden myself of a terrible secret before I die.
4	I am attached to an old bamboo farmer. She has grown sick and I want to help her.
5	There are too many dragons in my forest, but I feel the urge to propagate a wyrmling.
6	My forest is dying, but I won't give up on it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are some ideas for ways to include bamboo dragons in your game.

D4	ADVENTURE HOOK
1	Poachers have captured panda bears from a bamboo dragon's forest. The dragon needs help rescuing their lost friends.
2	A bamboo dragon went on a rampage injuring many farmers. It is prowling the grove and attacking anyone who comes near. The dragon must either be defeated or the reason for its sudden aggression must be discovered and resolved.
3	A plant hunter has taken a bamboo dragon away from its forest to add to their collection. Distressed, the dragon breaks free of captivity and begins rampaging through the city.
4	A volcano is about to erupt and destroy a forest. Its stubborn bamboo dragon must be persuaded to leave and lead all the creatures that trust it to safety.

Bamboo Dragon

Huge dragon (Floral), Neutral

Armor Class 17

Initiative +8 (18)

Hit Points 180 (19d12 + 57)

Speed 70 ft.

		MOD	SAVE			MOD	SAVE
STR	18	+4	+8	INT	10	+0	+0
DEX	18	+4	+8	WIS	16	+3	+7
CON	16	+3	+3	CHA	12	+1	+1

Skills Perception +7

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.; Passive Perception 17

Resistances Fire, Force, Radiant

Languages Draconic and one other language

Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Frightened, Stunned

Challenge 11 (XP 7, 200; PB +4)

TRAITS

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Many Heads. The dragon has six heads. Whenever the dragon takes 30 damage or more on a single turn, one of its heads dies. The dragon dies if all its heads are dead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes as many Bite attacks as it has heads. It can replace two Bite attacks with one Stomp or Tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Attack Roll:* +8, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) Piercing damage.

Stomp. *Melee Attack Roll:* +8, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) Bludgeoning damage and the target has the Prone condition.

Tail. *Dexterity Saving Throw:* DC 16, each creature in a 15-foot Cone. *Failure:* 11 (2d10) Bludgeoning damage and each target is pushed up to 15 feet straight away from the dragon. *Success:* Half damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Legendary Action Uses: 3 (4 in Lair). *Immediately after another creature's turn, the dragon can expend a use to take one of the following actions. The dragon regains all expended uses at the start of each of its turns.*

Charge. The dragon moves up to its speed and makes one Stomp attack.

Sprout Head. The dragon grows a new head and regains 25 Hit Points. The dragon can't take this action again until the start of its next turn. The dragon can't use this action if it has taken Poison or Necrotic damage since its last turn or if it already has a maximum of six heads.

Golden Poppy Dragon

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ Tiny | ☐ Large |
| ☒ Small | ☐ Huge |
| ☐ Medium | ☐ Gargantuan |

GIFTS FOR THE SUN

Long ago when the world of Ghardinn was young, the Sun looked down upon the lush grasses that covered the land and became curious. She climbed down from the sky and took a walk, admiring the plants that had grown thanks to Her light. In those days, primordial monsters roamed and hunted. A pack of scaled beasts attacked the Sun with teeth and claws. But She was the Sun, and the Sun cannot be harmed by mortal creatures. The Sun laughed as the monsters fell back, burned by Her radiance. She was delighted by their audacity.

In the meadows where the Sun strolled everything was brilliantly illuminated. The grasses began to shrivel and dry. Elsewhere, the rest of the world grew cold. Ghardinn came to the Sun to ask Her to return to her proper place in the sky. She was young and far smaller than the mighty Sun, but she approached with head held high. “Oh great Sun, you honor me too much with your presence on my humble land. Yet, my world grows cold and my creations wither without you shining above.”

The Sun regarded the young planet with confusion. Those with great power often cannot see the harm they do carelessly. She refused to go, too amused by the diverse wonders of the world compared to the emptiness of Her proper orbit.



Desperate, Ghardinn turned to her monsters, seizing some of the power that spilled carelessly from the Sun Herself to transform them. They grew bright and ferocious, redoubling their attacks on the great star. Even this was not enough to harm the Sun, but it did give her pause. In a voice that shook the planet, She spoke, "Ghardinn, child. I do not wish to fight with you for you shall lose and I thus will lose all this beauty you are making. I shall depart. But do Me this kindness. Let these creatures keep their golden glow so that I may see them from My distant home."

Ghardinn agreed. The monsters shrank but retained the portion of the Sun's brilliance and confidence Ghardinn had borrowed for them. Thus, the first golden poppy dragons grew and thrived, a gift for the Sun.

PHYSIOLOGY

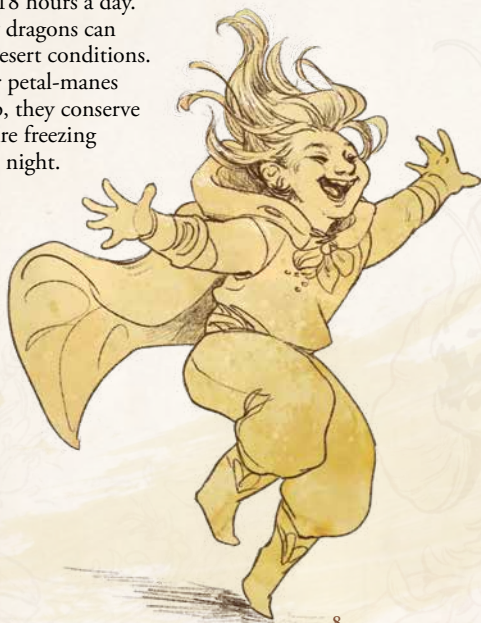
Golden poppy dragons' bright orange and yellow petals stand out in any landscape. Their heads are framed with a mane of petals that they flare to intimidate other creatures big or small. Soft fluffy petals grow on their chests. Their forelegs extend into colorful wings, and their two-part tails have long green fronds extending from a golden bloom. Golden poppy dragons hunt insects and small mammals with their sharp claws and teeth.

The golden poppy dragon has no natural predators thanks to its natural chemical defenses. Their bodies produce a powerful toxin that causes any creature that consumes it to fall unconscious for several days. This makes golden poppy dragons fearless around predators, a trait which can get them into trouble if they antagonize powerful beings who grow tired of their antics.

HABITAT

Golden poppy dragons prefer warm, dry climates. Poor and rocky soils that would not suit other floral dragons are ideal for them as golden poppy dragons sicken on rich ground or if they become too damp. These heat loving dragons are strictly diurnal, and are more active on warm sunny days than cool ones. In winter they sleep for up to 18 hours a day.

These hardy dragons can adapt to even desert conditions. By closing their petal-manes while they sleep, they conserve water and endure freezing temperatures at night.



Field Journal of Professor Arum Greenbulb

Day 0: My colleagues advised me not to bring my daughter Kalla with me on this expedition. Said it was foolish, that I wouldn't get any work done while chasing after a kid. Indeed, had I been going to research one of the more dangerous species of floral dragons, I would have heeded their advice. But after the death of her mother, how could I leave her? We both needed to get away from home for a while.

Coming here to the Golden Valley has been the best thing for Kalla. Within a few days she had made friends with the local golden poppy dragon population, including one very special dragon named Olzia. They play together every day. Seeing Kalla laugh again after so long has healed my heart. (Ren, I wish you were here to see it too.)



Fig. 1 A golden poppy dragon plays with her young halfling friend.



Fig. 2 A relaxed Golden Poppy Dragon will sleep anywhere, closing their petals.

BEHAVIOR

Golden poppy dragons form large bloomings of hundreds of individuals, ranging over wide swathes of territory.

While golden poppy dragons are unafraid of conflict, they don't instigate it. Instead, they exhibit a highly playful and social nature, enjoying the company of other floral dragons and humanoids. They spend much of their day playing, engaging in mock fights or chasing and tumbling with each other.

Play fights only turn serious during the spring breeding season, but they rarely end with more than minor injuries. The mating season takes place in early spring and lasts into summer. Golden poppy dragons mate with different partners each season. The female grows egg-seed pods on her tail. In one of the most dramatic births among all species of floral dragons, golden poppy dragon wyrmlings burst out of these seed-pods with a bang! This minor explosion does not harm the mother dragon, and the wyrmlings are fully formed miniature versions of the adults, standing only a few inches high. Golden poppy dragons live for around 30 years, becoming adults in their third spring. They never lose the frolicsome and confident attitude they are born with, even when their petals are old and wilting.

Thanks to their love of play, golden poppy dragons are great friends to children. Parents often encourage these relationships as anyone who cuddles up with a golden poppy dragon at night will have peaceful dreams. The diminutive dragons will also defend their humanoid friends, making them the perfect playmate for adventurous children.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Use the Golden Poppy Dragon Personality Traits and Golden Poppy Dragon Motivations tables to create original golden poppy dragons.

Golden Poppy Dragon Personality Traits

D8	TRAIT
1	I love to pounce on people. Boo!
2	I fall asleep in the most inconvenient spots like the middle of the road or in someone's backpack.
3	I know I'm beautiful and get upset if people don't admire me.
4	Though I am a particularly small dragon, that only makes me bolder!
5	Nothing can faze me; I'm always happy!
6	As soon as the sun rises, I'm ready to play.
7	I'll poke my snout into anyone's business.
8	I love to bask in the sunlight on my back.

Day 26: I'm learning more about golden poppy dragons than I could have imagined, all thanks to Kalla and Olzia. While their soporific effects on creatures that eat them were well established, their ability to promote restful sleep through proximity alone is a new discovery. Since Olzia began cuddling up to her at night, Kalla's nightmares have stopped. They both wake with the sun, bright and ready to face the day with a youthful exuberance I wish I could share.

But knowing that Olzia is looking out for my daughter, I don't mind letting them out to play without me while I have a slower morning. I wonder if I could create a tincture that supported restful sleep from the dragons? Perhaps Olzia would lend me some shed petals? (Would I still dream of you, Ren?)

MOTIVATIONS

Golden Poppy Dragon Motivations

D6	MOTIVATION
1	I enjoy bullying creatures that are bigger than me.
2	I'm engaged in a weeks-long game of hide and seek.
3	My little friend and I are going to explore a cave that no one else dares enter.
4	I scared a child and I must make amends.
5	I want to find the most comfortable place to settle in for a long nap.
6	My humanoid friend is growing up and doesn't want to play with me anymore, but I still want to play with them.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are some ideas for ways to include golden poppy dragons in your game.

D4	ADVENTURE HOOK
1	The Festival of the Sun is almost here. Remily [she/her] needs help preparing the golden poppy dragons for the parade, but they don't want to stop playing in mud. They need to be caught and given a groom before the big event. A sickness is sweeping through the golden poppy dragons. Their petals are losing their vibrancy and they are struggling to stay awake even on sunny days. A druid named Fell Munho [they/them] asks the party to take one of the sickly dragons to the Glasshall Conservatory to see if the scholars there can help.

D4	ADVENTURE HOOK
3	A dwarf child named Umal [he/him] and his golden poppy dragon Cali [she/her] friend have disappeared. They were last seen playing near some caves. A rockfall has trapped them inside.
4	A golden poppy dragon angered a bamboo dragon and only escaped through a lucky fluke. He is planning to go back and take on the larger dragon again.

Day 62: Our time in the Golden Valley is coming to an end. Kalla doesn't want to go home, and neither do I. Alas, research funding doesn't last forever, and I have classes to teach. There were a lot of tears when I told Kalla. Even my promises that we would return next summer weren't enough to make her feel better. They weren't empty promises either; the sleep tincture is getting a lot of interest back at Glasshall. More research is warranted.

Olzia to the rescue once again. (How have we been so lucky to find such a compassionate creature, Ren?) Even though golden poppy dragons prefer to live in large bloomings of their own kind, she agreed to come back to Escallonia with us. Kalla and I will miss the Golden Valley, but at least she will have her best friend with her.

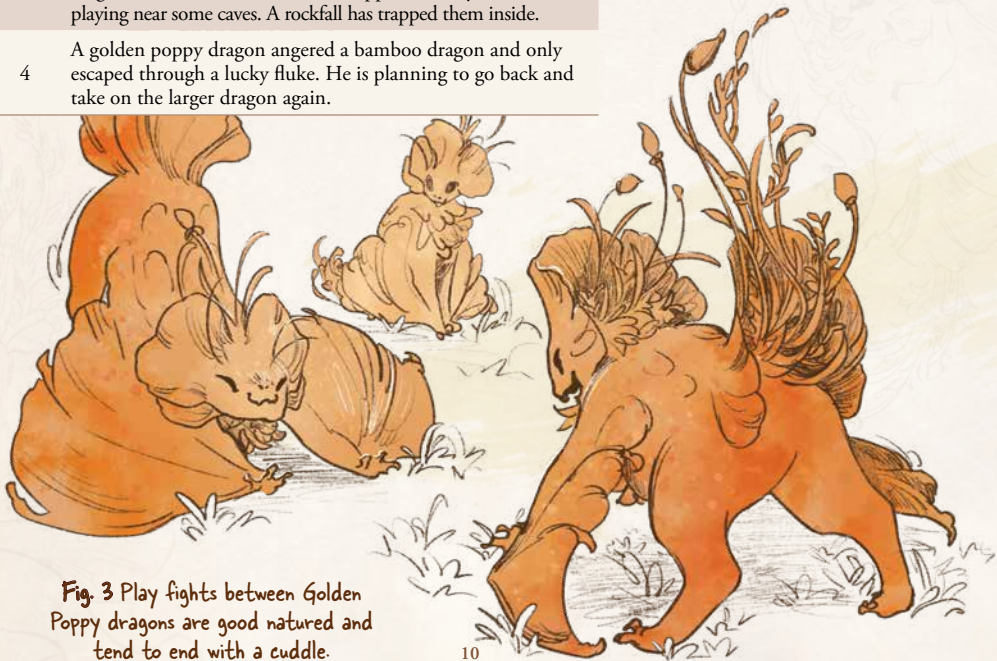


Fig. 3 Play fights between Golden Poppy dragons are good natured and tend to end with a cuddle.

Golden Poppy Dragon

Small Dragon (Floral), Neutral Good

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 44 (8d6 + 16)

Initiative +2 (12)

Speed 30 ft.; Fly 40 ft.

		MOD	SAVE			MOD	SAVE
STR	10	+0	+0	INT	8	-1	-1
DEX	15	+2	+2	WIS	14	+2	+2
CON	14	+2	+2	CHA	14	+2	+2

Skills Intimidation +4

Immunities Fire, Radiant; Frightened

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Draconic

Challenge 2 (XP 450; PB +2)

TRAITS

Flyby. The dragon doesn't provoke an Opportunity Attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Soporific. A creature who bites or consumes any part of the dragon falls unconscious for 1d4 days and can only be awoken if it is targeted with the *Lesser Restoration* spell.

Sweet Dreamer. A creature who completes a Long Rest within 5 feet of the dragon gains 2d4 + 2 Temporary Hit Points when they wake. Creatures who do not sleep cannot gain this benefit.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes two Scratch Attacks. It can replace one attack with a use of Spellcasting.

Scratch. *Melee Attack Roll:* +4, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) Slashing damage.

Spellcasting. The dragon casts one of the following spells, requiring no Material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks):

At Will: **Sacred Flame**

2/Day: **Sleep**





Old Man's Beard Dragon

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Tiny | ☐ Large |
| ☐ Small | ☒ Huge |
| ☐ Medium | ☐ Gargantuan |

PHYSIOLOGY

The old man's beard dragon appears to have a long serpentine body made from dark wood and a shaggy gray-green mane. However, it is the mane that holds the dragon's consciousness. The "body" is actually an enchanted tree that the moss-like dragon attaches to and uses to move and speak. When an old man's beard dragon grows on a tree it uproots itself and becomes sinuous. Within a few days the tree grows two legs and a horned head with a snout full of teeth. A dragon may use a tree in this way for centuries or only a season. When they move on, they leave the trees unharmed though often planted in a different place. Thanks to this, forests inhabited by old man's beard dragons are often the subject of legends about mysterious moving trees. If the tree-body is slain, the dragon can survive as long as a fragment of its mane can float to another tree to grow on. Oaks, cypress, and sweet gum trees are the old man's beard dragons' favorites.

The mane itself is made up of a tangle of stalks with thin curved leaves, which are heavily scaled. Each stalk is technically a separate organism, but together while growing on a tree body they act as a single old man's beard dragon. In early summer, the mane flowers with tiny blue or pink blooms. These release gossamer light seeds that float away on the wind. If enough seeds from different dragons land on a suitable tree they may form a new old man's beard dragon.

WEIRD WOODS

There we was in the forest. It was me and Big Sap and Kniver. We had this great plan, you see. The road, it cut through the edge of the forest like this. You couldn't ask for a sweeter spot to do a touch of robbing. Now, just fancy coaches and the like, you get me? I wouldn't hold up someone like you, Doc. Just a light bit of highway robbery because we'd fallen on hard times. I got standards.

Anyway, there we was. It's night, see. But we're awake. Them woods ain't so pretty when the sun goes down. There was all this funny moss stuff hanging in the trees. Tickles the back of your neck and gives you the shivers. Weird noises too. Like owls, but like they was out to get you. And the wind almost calling your name. Creepy.

But I'm in charge so I says, let's build a fire. We set it well back from the road. Don't want them plump carriages to see us. I set Kniver to watch out for anyone coming up along the road while me and Big Sap try to get some sleep.

Feels like not a moment has gone by that Kniver goes screaming off through the darkness. Hollering something about demons. Now Doc, I need you to understand, Kniver ain't the superstitious type. They're downright professional. Well, they always was until that night.

So now it's just me and Big Sap. We get real close to the fire. I says, "Let's stick together." And Big Sap says, "Yes, let's stick together." And then a blood-curdling voice right behind me says, "Yes, let's stick together."

I still don't know what happened to Big Sap after he split.

Now, there I am alone in the woods. I'm not going to say I didn't make an expeditious retreat. But the road ain't where I left it. There's this shadow chasing me. Something big. I could hear it slithering. And that voice is in my head, it's telling me all the things I ever done wrong. How did it know? Some of that stuff was from when I was a kid.

I break through the treeline, and there's the road. And there's a carriage coming up. I flag it down, not to rob it, y'know just to get away. It rolls to a stop, the horses almost trample me. The driver looks down and he's wearing this big hood. He says to me, "There's room inside, Brom Silva." And I know that ain't right because no fancy coach driver knows my name. He pulls back his hood and he's just a skull grinning down at me.

No thank you! Ol' Brom is not interested in sticking around to find out what happens next with a skeleton. So I ran all the way here, where the city guard very rudely arrested me for trying to tell everyone the woods is haunted and threw me in this cell with you.

Why you so interested anyways, Doc? When you and me get out of here, I'll take you to them weird woods so you do your fancy explaining of all this. But only if you pay me. And not at night again, no way.

— Tale told by brigand Brom Silva to Doctor Wealden Subshrub in jail

The path to knowledge twists and turns in ways one could never expect. Thanks to a tip from a talkative fellow I met whilst I was being detained because of that unpleasant seed smuggling accusation, I finally found an old man's beard dragon. Not only that, but I encountered them while they were undergoing their transformation process. I was only able to get so close because the dragon was moving from one tree-body to another.

Watching the lichen-like mane drape itself onto a new trunk was fascinating. The strands moved together as one, undulating and pulling themselves into a new position. I held still for hours, watching the transformation of the tree's trunk into a long, sinuous torso for the dragon, afraid I might disturb it.

HABITAT

Old man's beard dragons live in shady forests. They dislike direct sunlight as it can burn their delicate manes. Humid climates suit them best as they absorb water and nutrients from the air. By collecting and evaporating water in their manes, old man's beard dragons help cool the atmosphere around them, bringing some relief to forest creatures on sweltering days.

Old man's beard dragons avoid forests close to humanoid settlements because they are particularly sensitive to pollution in the air. Unfortunately, old man's beard dragons are becoming rarer as they are pushed out of their ancient habitats by humanoid expansion.

BEHAVIOR

Deeply intertwined with the forests they live in, old man's beard dragons are lore keepers, absorbing and holding the history of every plant and creature that lives and dies near them. They have great wisdom thanks to the influence of these memories. Old man's beard dragons have particular affection for bats, birds, insects, and small floral dragons, allowing them to live in their manes.

Rarely, an old man's beard dragon will befriend a druid or other humanoid who truly appreciates the balance of nature. They can be wise advisors to these companions, drawing on centuries of memories from the forest.



Fig 1. An old man's beard dragon transforming a tree into a new body for itself.

However, old man's beard dragons dislike most humanoids because they associate them with pollution, such as camp fires or industry. Dragons can smell a humanoid presence from far away. Therefore, old man beard dragons often attempt to scare humanoids away from their forests not with direct attacks but with subtle intimidation and hauntings using enchantments and illusions. Only as a last resort do the dragons reveal themselves or engage in combat.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Use the Old Man's Beard Dragon Personality Traits and Old Man's Beard Dragon Motivations tables to create original old man's beard dragons.

Old Man's Beard Dragon Personality Traits

D8	TRAIT
1	I would rather use my magic to entertain than terrify.
2	I am a young dragon, eager to gather memories.
3	I have a morbid fascination with humanoids. Their memories are so intriguing.
4	I feel lonely unless a few critters are living in my mane.
5	I hate humanoids for choking the air with smoke.
6	I like to hang upside down in trees.
7	I refuse to change to a new tree body even though mine is falling apart.
8	I dance in the dappled sunlight to produce swirling shadows on the forest floor.

MOTIVATIONS

Old Man's Beard Dragon Motivations

D6	MOTIVATION
1	I had to flee my old forest. The memories of everyone I lost cause me anguish, so I want to find a way to forget.
2	I want memories of places far away and will share the lore I know in exchange for them.
3	I change my tree body every few months, searching for the perfect fit.
4	I want to collect the memories of creatures who have lived fascinating lives.
5	The druid who protects my forest is dying. They are too weak to find a successor, so it is up to me.
6	I want to drive humanoids out of my forest before they cause too much harm.

Fig. 2 The growth of a two-toed foot with short claws for climbing marks the end of the transformation process.



The dragon grew a head and began sniffing the air. I knew they had spotted me when they spoke. After what my former cell-mate had said (oh, my peers back at Glasshall will never let me live that down), I had expected the dragon to be aggressive. Instead, they asked me about my work.

Their questions were so insightful and specific that I soon realized that the dragon must have some sort of telepathic abilities. I wanted to ask the dragon more questions, but they finished growing their limbs and crawled off into the forest. They didn't tell me I had to leave though, so maybe I can learn more.

Night came and went and the dragon did not assail me with terrifying visions or try to chase me off. I have been very careful not to do anything that might offend it, so it was a rather chilly night with no fire. This morning we met again. I noted that despite their fearsome reputation, the old man's beard dragon allowed many smaller creatures to climb all over its body and through its mane.

After making my sketches, I dared to approach. I asked the dragon why they had allowed me to stay in their forest. They said that I had interesting memories and that they had seen how I respected other floral dragons. I hope that this will become a fruitful research relationship.

My other "friend" from the jail also came back in the daylight, shaking a little but still talking up a storm. I believe he has taken a liking to me. The feeling is mutual. Not many people would brave a haunted forest for me. Fieldwork always brings unexpected discoveries.

- Doctor Wealden Subshrub's Field Notes

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are some ideas for ways to include old man's beard dragons in your game.

D4 ADVENTURE HOOK

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Sabotage and sinister hauntings are slowing work at a logging camp. The lumberjacks believe there is something evil in the woods, but the camp head is convinced there is a mundane explanation. She wants the situation resolved quickly and is willing to pay handsomely. In truth, an old man's beard dragon is trying to chase the loggers away from his home. |
| 2 | The famed wizard Rogene of the Night [he/him] died without revealing the code needed to access his archive. The party learns that he spent time in the forest of an old man's beard dragon before he passed so the dragon will hold the memory of the code. It is a race against time as another group of adventurers is headed to the forest too. |
| 3 | An old man's beard dragon whose forest has been logged is seeking revenge against not just those who destroyed her home but all humanoids. |
| 4 | An old man's beard dragon approaches the party in the night. Her forest is suffering from a drought and she is desperate. If they can find a way to bring water back to the region, she promises to share one of her ancient memories of a long lost treasure. |

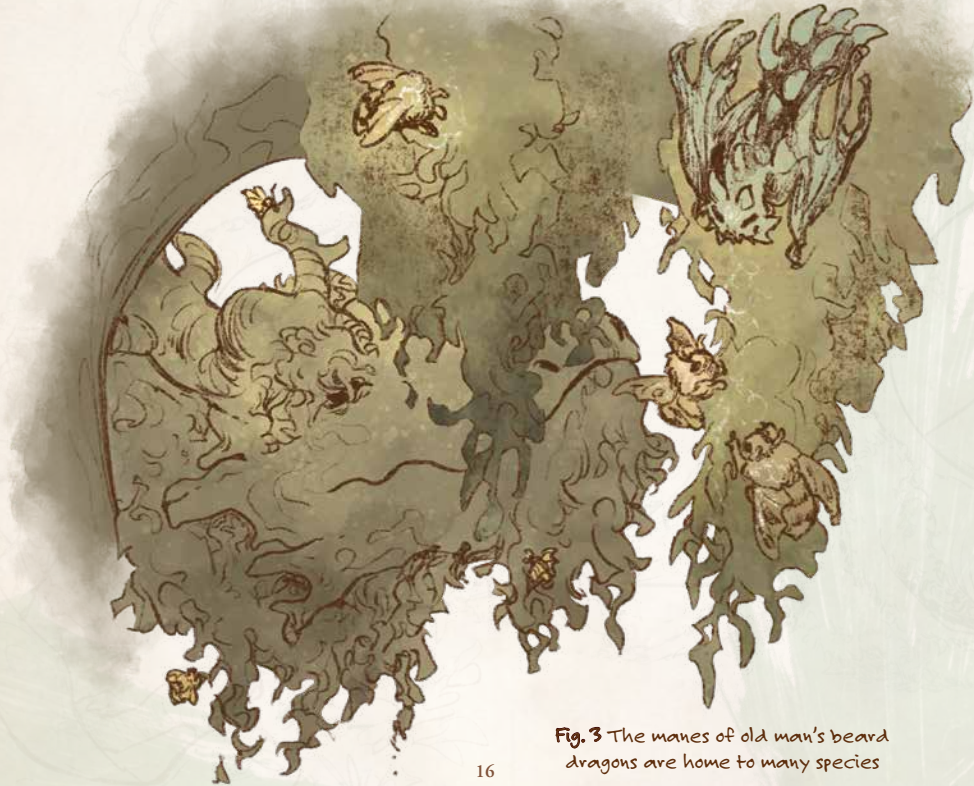


Fig. 3 The manes of old man's beard dragons are home to many species

Old Man's Beard Dragon

Huge Dragon (Floral), Neutral

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 142 (15d12 + 45)

Initiative +2 (12)

Speed 40 ft., Climb 40 ft.

		MOD	SAVE			MOD	SAVE
STR	18	+4	+7	INT	14	+2	+2
DEX	15	+2	+6	WIS	18	+4	+7
CON	17	+3	+3	CHA	14	+2	+2

Skills Deception +5, Insight +7, Perception +7

Resistances Cold

Immunities Psychic; Blinded, Charmed, Frightened

Senses Blindsight 30 ft.; Passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 7 (XP 2,900; PB +3)

TRAITS

Epiphyte. While Grappling a creature, the dragon regains 9 (2d8) Hit Points at the start of each of its turns.

Forest Camouflage. The dragon has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in forest terrain.

Memory Keeper. For every hour a creature spends within 1,000 feet of the dragon, the dragon learns 1 year of its memories, starting with the oldest. If a creature dies within 1,000 feet of the dragon, the dragon learns all of its memories. The dragon can recall these memories as if they were its own.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three Bite attacks and one Coil attack. It can replace one Bite attack with a use of Spellcasting.

Bite. *Melee Attack Roll:* +4, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) Piercing damage.

Coil. *Strength Saving Throw:* DC 15, one Medium or smaller creature the dragon can see within 5 feet. *Failure:* 20 (3d10 + 4) Bludgeoning damage, and the target has the Grappled condition (escape DC 15).

Spellcasting. The dragon casts one of the following spells, requiring no Material components and using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At Will: *Druidcraft, Minor Illusion, Vicious Mockery, Entangle, Fog Cloud*

1/Day Each: *Blight, Detect Thoughts, Dissonant Whispers, Gust of Wind, Web*

