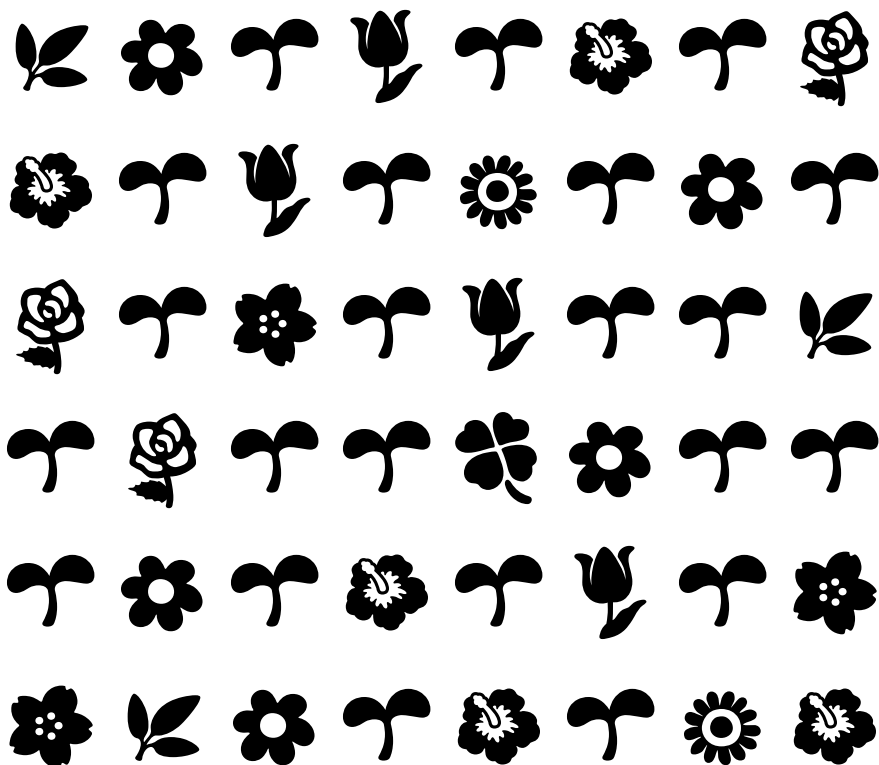


gardening games

(or)

gardening as a
mode of play



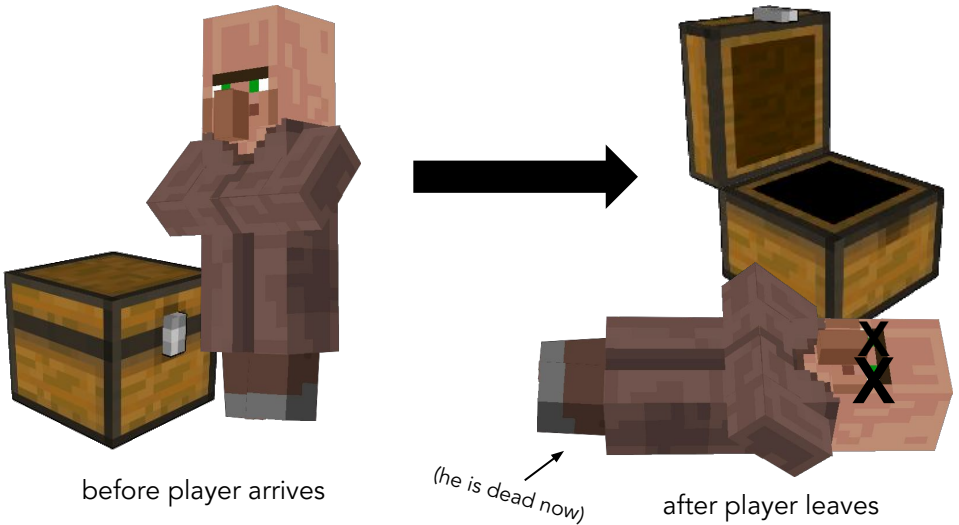
by @maxkreminski

mining games



In mining games,
the world starts out full of neat stuff!
Unsolved puzzles, hidden treasure,
interesting inhabitants, unresolved stories...

But then the player shows up and **RUINS EVERYTHING.**



Mining games embody a fundamentally *extractive* approach to gameplay. The player's presence in the game world makes the world less alive, less interesting & generally *worse* over time as they drain the world of its content. Then, once a game space is fully "mined out", there's no reason to stick around, so they move on to the next.

Many mining games use procedural content generation (PCG) to generate an *infinite frontier*, so that players always have somewhere to go next. That way, they never have to confront the fact that they ***ruin everything they touch!***

Mining games are the ultimate *entitlement simulators*. The game world exists entirely to serve the player's needs. PCG is used to *fuel the content furnace*, to feed the player's *all-consuming hunger* for content.

gardening games

are different! They're basically the anti-mining games.

Animal Crossing is my go-to example of a gardening game. It features:

A tightly bounded physical space

A world that goes on growing & changing, even without the player's involvement

A world that becomes *more* interesting & alive as the player spends more time there, not less



Gardening games represent an alternative way to use PCG in games. AC runs its terrain generator exactly once: when you first launch the game. Rather than generating billions of slightly different artifacts to fuel the content furnace, it generates *one* artifact (the town) & asks the player to take care of it as it evolves.

One key principle of gardening game design is that relationships take time.



By distributing content primarily across *time* rather than space, AC can remain interesting indefinitely. Spending more time in the town doesn't deplete it, but *enriches* it with new stories and gradually deepening relationships. Nothing is ever "used up".

Why make gardening games???

Sustainability

Coziness

Infinite play

Aesthetic of caretaking

Hasn't been done a million times already

Decentering the player

Anti-colonialism

Respect for player's time

Games as parallel worlds



other gardening games



Neko Atsume

"minimum viable gardening game"



Cities: Skylines

& other city builder games

Vahab-he

We first became aware of the Vahab-he in 32329. They reside on the frigid planet Aha-beavev in the Bacaov-ba system. They are industrious, intelligent, and passive.

The Vahab-he have begun to cultivate crops. They are especially fond of ebcavheb, a kind of bitter moss that grows well in the dominant climate of Aha-beavev.

We could teach them the secrets of **toolmaking**, or of **fishing**, or of **writing**, or of **astronomy**.



Epitaph

oh hey I made this one

Fish tanks

ok maybe not? but like sorta

Plus I've collected a bunch of related links at
are.na/max-kreminski/gardening-games

