

Unbound Monsters: Blight Root

THE BLIGHT ROOT

From realms beyond the material plane come a threat insidious and clever, a growth that takes root upon unsuspecting worlds and proliferates only to conquer. Known as Blightroot, this inherently parasitic infestation possesses a singular will: to siphon the life energies of an entire world into their own spread, subsuming and replacing natural life, even sentient beings with their kind. Initially, these invaders land as but seeds, hurled through the Astral Plane at any target within their reach. Once rooted, these seeds quickly grow into gnarled, treelike formations, which spread across a world without cessation, their deep roots stifling all other life and draining a planet of the very energies that once sustained it, a process that gives the Blight Roots their name. Though their origins are heretofore unknown, many dead worlds covered in their gnarled infestation pay grim testament to the speed of their work, and for those still untouched, the only hope for life itself is to cut their insidious invasion off at the source- and fast.

A legion from a single seed. One would not be foolish to assume these entities are nothing but a loathsome parasite, unthinking in their hunger, but this does not speak to the full insidiousness of their nature. Unlike simple fungi or an infectious disease, the Blightroot seems to act with strategy, a design; every fell creature spawned from a Root growth is born with a purpose and a role, and far from mindless monstrosities, these beings have been seen to create structures, organize into units and formations, directed by a hand not their own, yet possessing will and mind even then. These beings learn from their potential foes, adapt as well to armies as to predatory beasts, and have been known even to be capable of long-term planning, circumventing enemies too difficult to face head-on but starving their supply lines, their techniques alien but their tactics all too familiar.

The Song. With such clever strategic planning as is necessary to conquer a world, it comes as no surprise, then, that the Blightroot works with a purpose, though the origin of these creatures' commands is as alien as the beings themselves. As the mass of their spawning trees grow, so too does the collective intelligence of the Root, their purpose and will guided by a singular, shared intelligence they call "The Song". Similar across all Root invasions and revered by the creatures of the Root as though it is a god, shrines and monuments are built in its honor, speaking to a culture that is, though single-minded, still possesses an urge to create, to commemorate. Spreading this Song across multitudinous worlds, the Blightroot seem content to spread its praises even as they break the bodies of all unfortunate enough to be made its subject.

Arboreal Horrors. As one would expect of an entity so adaptable, the Blightroot's spawn form a wide range of plantlike creatures, from almost humanoid footsoldiers to hulking monstrosities. Due to their arboreal nature, these beings can be adapted endlessly, filling any number of roles that their conquest of a world requires, even grafting parts onto existing bodies seamlessly. However, these creatures are not limitless, as without the energy and life force to sustain their creation, no more can be produced. Thus, it is this source- the life energies and biomass of countless living creatures- that must be cut off to halt the Root's advance.



ROOT FIEND

Though called 'Fiends' by those who first encounter them, these beings are more akin to a worker caste or tenders, the footsoldiers of the Blightroot's dominion. Among the first horrors spawned by the Root upon landing on a world, it is these beings who nurture the Root in its infancy, hunting and protecting as required, even able to use simple tools and weaponry as needed. Almost artisanally efficient life-forms, it is the cheap, adaptable nature of these creatures that proves their greatest asset, a role carefully cultivated over countless generations.

BLIGHT FIEND

Medium aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Proficiency +2

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Blight

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Wood Walk. Difficult terrain caused by plants doesn't cost the blight fiend extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blight fiend makes two melee weapon attacks, only one of which can be a sap attack.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage or 9 (2d6+2) slashing damage if the blight fiend has temporary hit points.

Sap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) necrotic damage and the blight fiend gains 5 temporary hit points.

BLIGHT SOLDIER

Medium aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Proficiency +2

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Blight

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Wood Walk. Difficult terrain caused by plants doesn't cost the blight soldier extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blight soldier makes two melee weapon attacks, only one of which can be a sap attack. If two hatchet attacks hit the same target, and the target is a medium or smaller creature, its speed becomes 0 until the end of the blight soldier's next turn.

Hatchet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage or 12 (2d8 + 3) damage if the blight soldier has temporary hit points.

Sap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) necrotic damage and the blight soldier gains 5 temporary hit points.

BLIGHT DARTER

Medium aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Proficiency +2

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Blight

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Bolstered Nimbleness. When the blight darter has temporary hit points, it can use a bonus action to disengage.

Wood Walk. Difficult terrain caused by plants doesn't cost the blight darter extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blight darter makes two attacks, only of which can be a sap attack.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Thorn Dart. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage or 9 (2d6+2) piercing damage if the blight darter has temporary hit points.

Sap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) necrotic damage and the blight darter gains 5 temporary hit points.

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BLIGHT CALLER

If the Root Fiends form the 'worker' caste, then Blight Callers are the priesthood of the Root. Once the Root itself is able to expand without the constant care of its Fiends, the Blight Callers begin to appear, their minds such as they are more attuned to the Root's Song and able to spread its commands to their lessers. Able to manifest the Song's supernatural power in small bursts, these zealots seem to whip the creatures around them into a frenzy, turning already-deadly beings into an unshakeable battle line. Needless to say, then, these creatures are well-guarded, central as they are to the hierarchy of the Root.

BLIGHT DEFILER

The Blightroot is no stranger to resistance when taking over a world. Only capable of spreading for months, perhaps years before encountering resistance from empires hundreds of years old, with infrastructure and defenses well exceeding anything it can produce. Yet while walls and forts may hinder marauding armies, they are of little consequence to the Blight Defiler. Spawned in the form of a hulking, living battering ram, the Defiler sacrifices any higher reasoning for raw, animalistic might, this hulking monstrosity coated in gnarled bark crushes fortifications and masonry with ease, unleashing a torrent of deadly tendrils in a rampage that even the Root's own soldiers know to hold back from. Thus, while a wall may hold off many assaults, it only needs to be breached once for the Root to crush what hopeful defenders remain.

BLIGHT GREATROOT

In the rare cases where the Root finds its plans subverted, its armies pushed back, it changes its Song. No longer a melodious tune, it becomes a dirge of death, a war march calling its servants home. Sacrificing bodies and recycling themselves as resources for a great and terrible construction, the creatures of the Root become fodder for the Blightroot's most powerful warriors, known by those few who have encountered them and lived to tell the tale as the Greatroots. Possessing enormous physical and mental power, these arboreal horrors are the ultimate weapon at the Root's disposal, and their lessers treat them with the reverence of demigods, perhaps seeing their own self to create such magnificent tools of destruction as the ultimate sacrifice. Whatever the case may be, these creature soon stride forth, both to defend their home, and likely turn the tide back in its favor.

THE BLIGHT ROOT IN YOUR GAME

As an invading alien force from beyond the material plane, the Blight Root can be an easy addition to any game. But perhaps your world has a very tight cosmology with nothing able to interfere from beyond the established planes, or you feel the idea of eldritch plant-like creatures is not all that appealing to you and would rather give the Blight Root monsters a new coat of paint and a new premise? Here are some alternative ideas on how to feature the Blight Root in your game:

- In ancient history when life in the world manifested, a primordial growth emerged. This growth was born with an immense hunger, a hunger that the early life of the world could not support. So this life form was forcefully contained underground where it would find no life and would eventually starve. While the growth starved, it created seeds to secure its legacy. Over the millennia these seeds remained undisturbed. Curious explorers and ambitious miners of the current day found these mysterious seeds, and one ill fated soul decided to plant them, expecting a long extinct plant to grow from it. Oh how horribly right this poor soul will be.
- The blight are treelike creatures of Faerun that are spawned from corrupted trees, commonly referred to as Gulthias tree, named after the notorious Vampire. Now think that, but much worse, like a tree that has been corrupted by a greater evil deity, or that was exposed to an infinitely corrupted substance. This tree would change and mutate into a Blight Root and begin to spawn unique and twisted blights, far more wicked and corrupting than common blight... and far more ambitious.
- Coexistence between the civilized people of the world and nature has always been a back and forth struggle of survival. Civilisation cannot flourish with nature run rampant, and the further civilisation expands, the more nature becomes pushed back. In recent years though, technological advancements tipped the scales of this conflict. With new tools and technologies, the people of the world have been forcefully taming the wilds, exerting more and more pressure onto nature. With this pressure, nature finds itself driven into a corner - and pressure always demands change - a forced evolution. Soon the civilized people of the world will reap the wrath of nature, as arboreal horrors break out of the darkest woods. These horrors far exceed the beast and plants witnessed before, they are a new evolution of creature, ready to reclaim what was taken from nature by force.

BLIGHT CALLER

Medium aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)

Proficiency +3

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Blight

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Song of the Root. A root creature that starts its turn within 60 ft. of the blight caller and can hear the caller gains 5 temporary hit points and is immune to being charmed or frightened until the beginning of the blight caller's next turn. The blight caller cannot benefit from this trait.

Innate Spellcasting. The blight caller's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). The blight caller can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At Will (each): *Detect Magic*, *Mold Earth*, *Thorn Whip*
1/Short Rest (each): *Blight*, *Entangle*, *Spike Growth*

ACTIONS

Garbled Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Explosive Proliferation. The blight caller targets the body of a root creature that died since the end of the blight caller's last turn. The target body bloats and explodes into a 10 ft. radius of corruptive sludge. Each creature within the area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save a creature takes 13 (3d8) necrotic and 13 (3d8) poison damage. On a successful save a creature takes half as much damage.

REACTIONS

Pain Distribution. When a root creature within 60 ft. of the blight caller takes damage, it and another root creature within 10 ft. of the triggering root creature take equal to half the damage instead. To do so the blight caller must see both creatures and the source of the damage.

VARIANT: A WORTHY SACRIFICE

The Blight Root is determined in their conquest and is willing to sacrifice pawns that outlived their usefulness.

Besides a recently fallen root, the blight caller can target a root creature (including itself) with 10 or less hit points within 60 ft. of itself as the target of its *Explosive Proliferation* action. The root explodes and dies. The explosion is the same as if the body of a fallen root was targeted.

BLIGHT DEFILER

Large aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 147 (14d10 + 70)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (0)	20 (+5)	6 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Proficiency +4

Saving Throws Constitution +9, Wisdom +6

Skills Perception +6

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Blight

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Charging Tackle. If the blight defiler moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, the creature must succeed a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Siege Monster. The blight defiler deals double damage to objects and structures.

Wood Walk. Difficult terrain caused by plants doesn't cost the blight defiler extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blight defiler makes three attacks; two slam attacks and one sap attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage or 24 (4d8+6) bludgeoning damage if the blight defiler's hit points are equal or below half of its maximum hit points.

Sap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage and the blight defiler gains 10 temporary hit points. If the blight defiler's hit points are equal or below half of its maximum hit points it gains 20 temporary hit points instead.

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BLIGHT GREATROOT

Gargantuan aberration (Root), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (19, if it has temporary hit points, natural armor)

Hit Points 247 (15d20 + 90)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	10 (0)	23 (+6)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)

Proficiency +5

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Blight

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Gnarled Bark. The blight greatroot has a +2 bonus to its AC as long as it has temporary hit points.

Sapping Roots. At the beginning of the blight greatroot's turn each creature that is restrained by its gnarled roots takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage and the greatroot gains temporary hit points equal to half of the total necrotic damage dealt (maximum 40 temporary hit points).

Wood Walk. Difficult terrain caused by plants doesn't cost the blight greatroot extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The blight greatroot makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 13 (3d8) necrotic damage. If the target is a size large or smaller creature, it must succeed a DC 21 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Blighted Artillery. The blight greatroot hunches over and fires two blighted spore sacs from its back at points within 120 ft. of itself. Once a sac reaches its destination or impacts against a solid surface, it explodes into a corrupting cloud. Each creature within 5 feet of the point where the sac explodes must succeed a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) necrotic and 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Gnarled Roots (Recharge 5-6). The blight greatroot extends its parasitic roots over the ground within 20 ft. of itself. The ground within 20 ft. of the blight greatroot becomes covered by gnarled roots and is difficult terrain for 1 minute or until the greatroot uses this action again. Each creature in the area of the greatroot's choice must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save a creature takes 36 (8d8) bludgeoning damage and is restrained by gnarled roots as long as it remains in the area or until it breaks free. On a successful save a creature takes half as much damage and isn't restrained. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 19 Strength check. If it succeeds, it breaks free and is no longer restrained. The roots can be attacked and destroyed (AC 17; 19 hit points; resistance to necrotic and poison damage and immunity to psychic damage).

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