



ART CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

FOREST GUARDIAN

These forest-dwelling fey creatures are as ancient as the trees they protect. They appear as massive humanoid figures with antlered skulls for heads and razor-sharp claws. The guardians wear scraps of leather and adorn themselves with yellowed-bone totems and fetishes. Often accompanied by a murder of crows or a pack of wolves, they roam the forests in search of any who would dare to enter uninvited. While they prefer to hunt at night, it is not uncommon to see them striding between the trees, searching for a fresh victim. Even the sylvan beings of the forest are wary of a guardian while it prowls—it lives only to protect the forest and for the hunt.

Nature's Revenge. Just as foresters chop down trees, so does a guardian create new saplings—from the bodies of those same foresters. A single swipe of a claw is enough to infect a creature with deadly spores that sap the victim's strength as they grow into lush plant life.

Verdant Sentinels. The guardians roam the forests with ethereal grace, moving magically through the trees themselves. They use their innate ability to speak with plants and animals to learn what is happening within their forest. Nothing happens inside their territory without them knowing and eventually dealing with the unwanted intruders.

A FOREST GUARDIAN'S LAIR

The lair of a forest guardian is not difficult to find as the area surrounding the entrance is littered with the bones of its victims. Totems and fetishes fashioned from leather straps and skeletal remains hang from trees and on posts, warning away those foolish enough to trespass into the guardian's domain. The guardians typically make their homes underground in dank caves filled with lush plant life found in the deepest recesses of their forests.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), a forest guardian can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects. It can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- An insidious wail emits from the totems in the lair, and each creature other than the guardian and its allies must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours.

- Rolling fog rises from the ground as though a *fog cloud* spell were cast. The fog lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- The guardian chooses an allied creature and bestows a magical enhancement upon it as if an *enhance ability* spell was cast. The enhancement lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing the forest guardian's lair is warped by its presence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Plant life in the region grows twice as fast as usual within 1 mile of the guardian's lair. Crops yield full harvests, and forests expand their borders more quickly than they can be cut down.

- Crows and wolves serve as the guardian's eyes and ears. It instantly learns of any who enters the area within 1 mile of its lair.
- A misty fog blankets the area within 1 mile of a forest guardian's lair, lightly obscuring the entire region. Totems and skeletal fetishes adorn the trees within the mist.

If the forest guardian dies, the crows and wolves lose their supernatural link to it. The mist remains, but within 1d10 days, the plant life reverts to its expected growth rate.

FOREST GUARDIAN

Large fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (21d10 + 63)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +8, Wis +7, Cha +9

Skills Animal Handling +12, Nature +6

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Druidic, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus: +5

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the guardian fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

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

Innate Spellcasting. The guardian's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *druidcraft*, *poison spray*

3/day each: *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *lesser restoration*, *moonbeam*

1/day each: *conjure animals*, *geas*, *pass without trace*

Keen Sight and Smell. The guardian has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Magic Weapons. The guardian's weapon attacks are magical.

Plant Stride. The guardian is not affected by difficult terrain created by normal or magical plants.

Speak With Plants and Beasts. The guardian can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The guardian makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be infected with leeching spores. The infected target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4 points and decreases by 1d4 points for every 24 hours that elapse. If the infection reduces the target's Strength to 0, the target dies, and its body turns into a sapling. The infection lasts until removed by a greater restoration spell or other magic.

Wrath of the Green (Recharge 5-6). The guardian exhales a blast of verdant energy in a 90-foot cone. All normal plants and roots in the area grow thick and overgrown and the area becomes difficult terrain for 1 minute, and each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage and is grappled (escape DC 18). While grappled this way, a creature is also restrained and takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't grappled.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The guardian can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The guardian regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cast. The guardian casts a spell.

Claw. The guardian makes a claw attack.

Tree Stride (Costs 2 Actions). The guardian steps magically into one living tree within its reach and emerges from a second living tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger.

Call Lightning (Costs 3 Actions). The guardian chooses a point it can see within 120 feet. A bolt of lightning flashes down from the sky to that point. Each creature within 5 feet of that point must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 16 (3d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.