Dandelions

I know your dreams, my friend. You wish to be a dandelion, riding the winds, a sentient piece of fluff borne across the fields of—
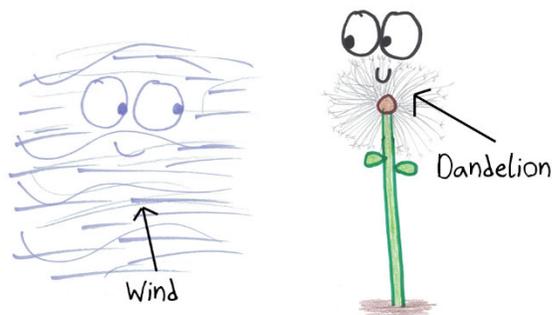
No, wait, I'm sorry. Misread that dream. You wish to be the wind itself, sweeping the fluff from the dandelions and carrying it—

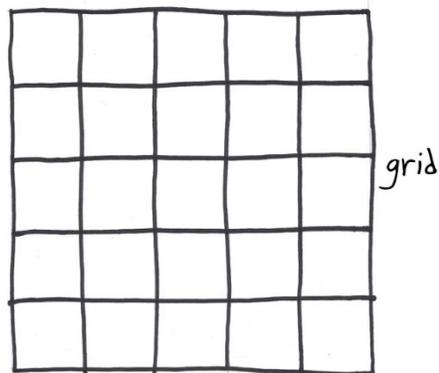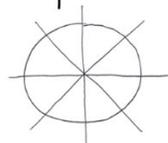No, wait. I see now. You want to be… *both*?

Aha! I have just the game for you.

How to Play

How many players? Two: the Dandelions, and the Wind.

Wind

Dandelion

What do you need? Paper and pencil. Draw a five-by-five grid, plus a little compass rose.

compass rose

grid

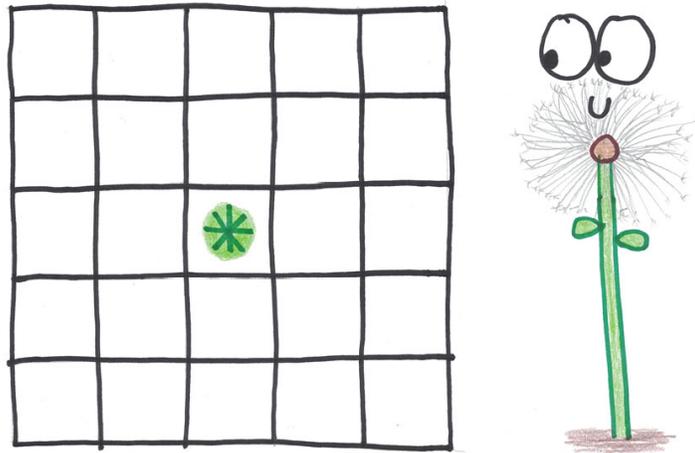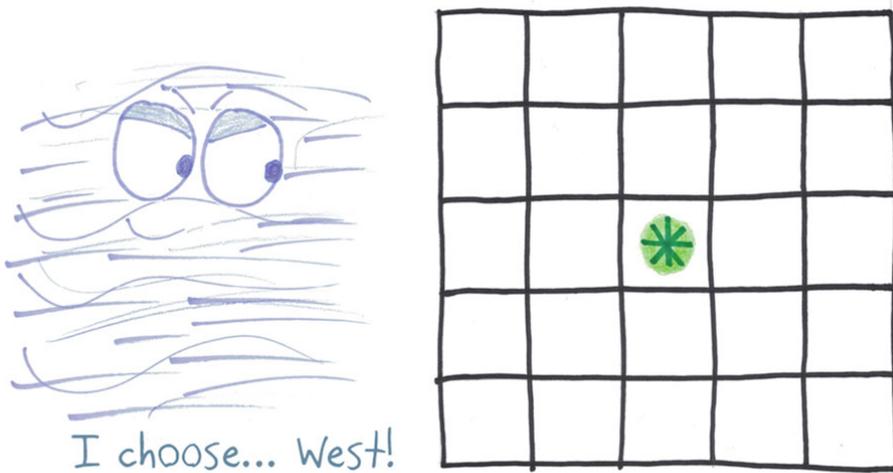**What's the goal?** The Dandelions aim to cover the whole meadow. The Wind aims to leave at least one square of the meadow uncovered.
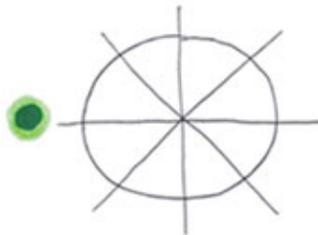
What are the rules?

1. The Dandelions move first, by **placing a flower** (i.e., an asterisk) anywhere in the grid.
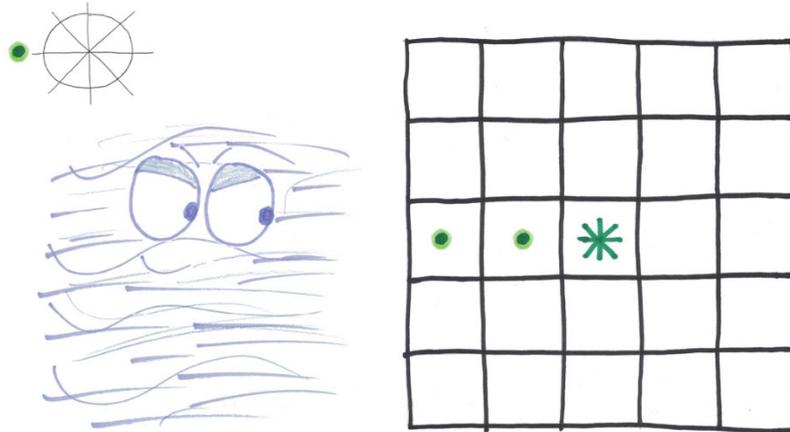

2. The Wind moves next, by **blowing a gust in any of the eight directions** (North, South, Northwest, Southeast, and so on).
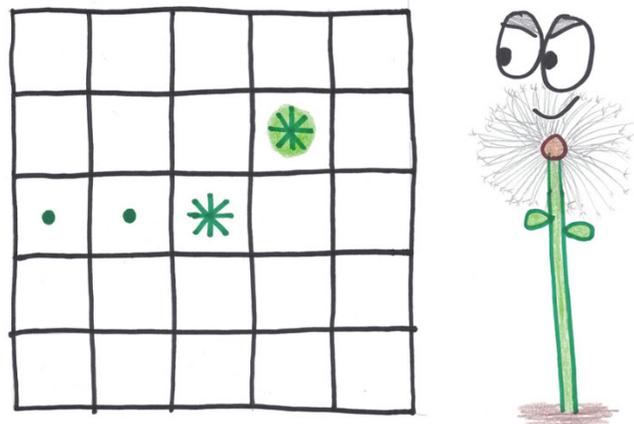

(The wind may blow **only once in each direction**, so once a direction is used, mark it off on the compass rose.)
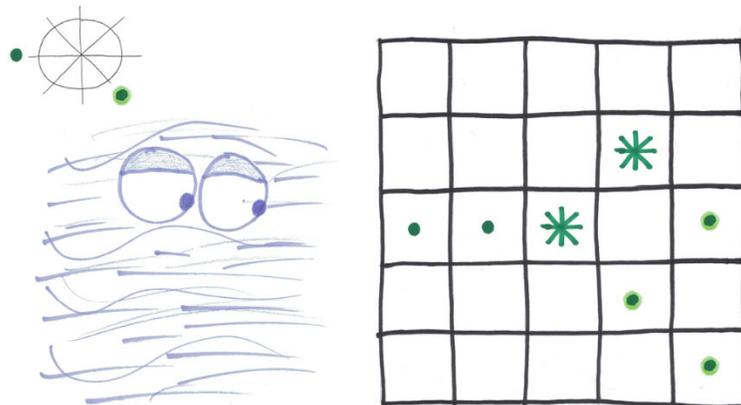
3. Every dandelion's **seeds are carried in the wind's direction**. Any vacant square downwind of a dandelion is now occupied by a seed (i.e., a dot).
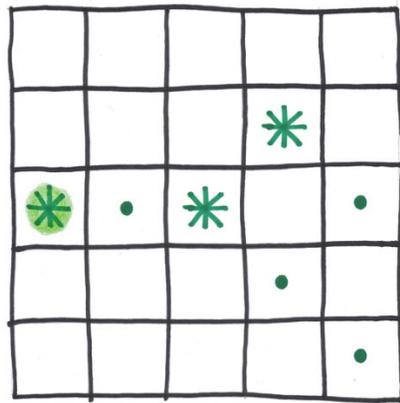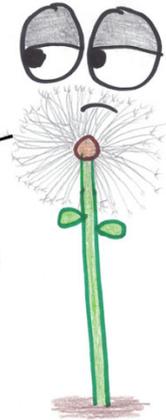
4. Continue taking turns. A **dandelion is planted**…

…and then **the wind blows, carrying the seeds of all dandelions** on the board.
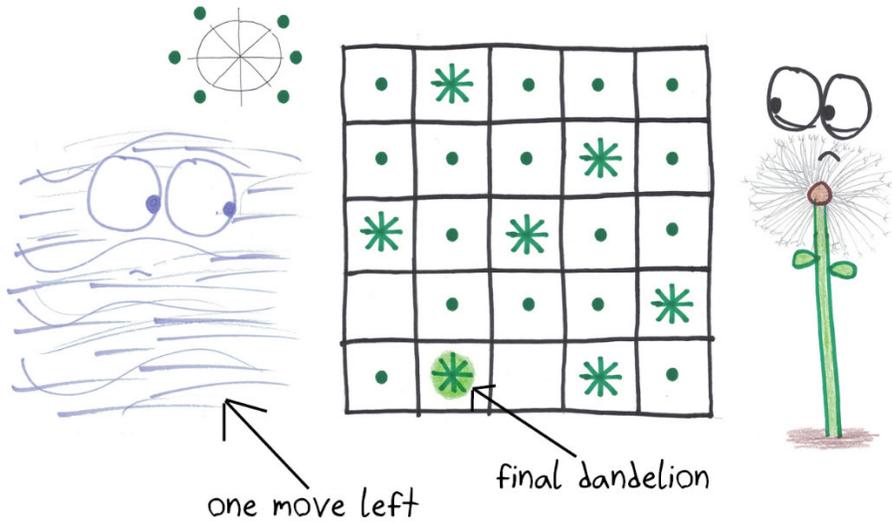
5. You may, if you like, plant a new dandelion **where there is already a seed**.
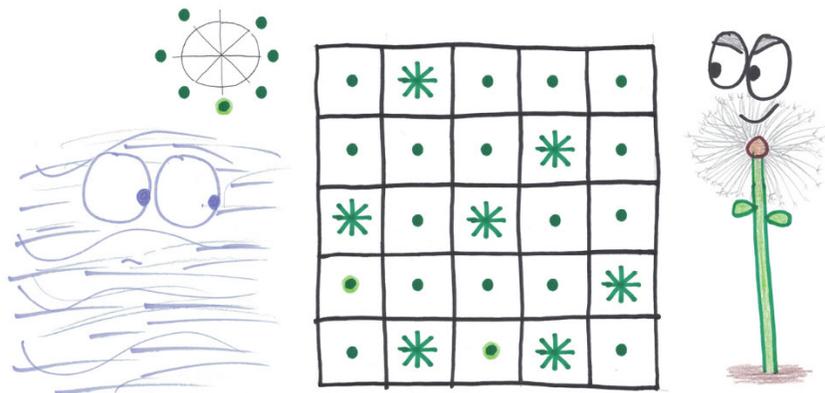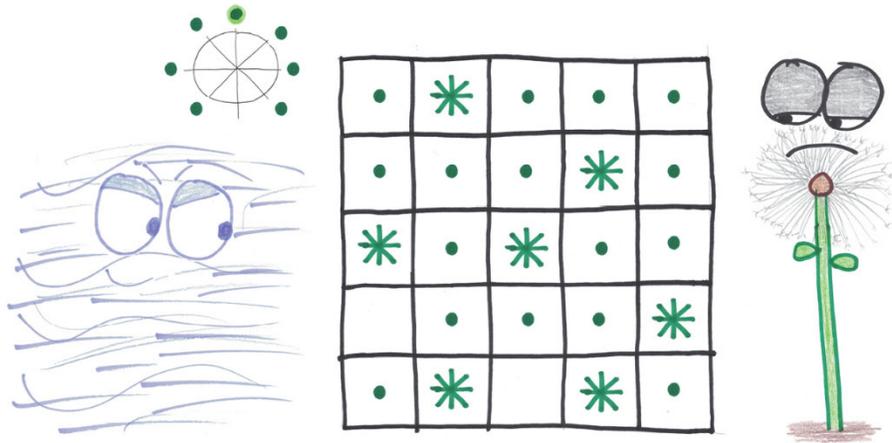

Well... I already had a seed there, but I want a flower.

6. **Each player gets 7 moves**. Thus, a total of 7 dandelions are planted, and the wind blows 7 times (using up every direction except one).

one move left

final dandelion

7. If the dandelions and their seeds **cover the whole board**, **then the Dandelions win.**

8. If not, then **the Wind wins**.

Variations

Larger Meadow: If the Dandelions are finding victory too easy, try a 6 by 6 grid.

Double Planting: If the Wind is finding victory too easy, begin the game with a "double turn": two Dandelions are planted, then the Wind blows twice. (After that, play resumes as normal.)

Keeping Score: Switch to a larger board (I suggest 7 by 7), so that the Dandelions will struggle to cover the full board. Play one round each as the Dandelions and as the Wind. As the Wind, you score a point for each square that's left uncovered.

Collaborative (or Solo): Have the wind work *together* with the Dandelions, so that both want to cover the whole board. What's the largest board you can manage? (Start with 8 by 8.)

The Collaborative Puzzle: With collaborative play, how many squares can the Dandelions cover on an *n* by *n* grid? (An open mathematical problem!)