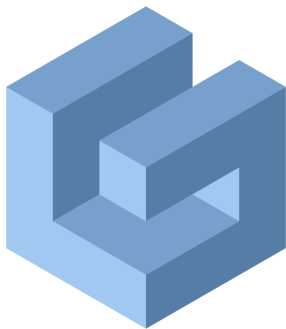


Sapling Wars

Game Design Document



Version 2.5 06/26/2026



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GXPLOREERS
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Table of Content

Game Overview	3
Premise	3
Selling Points	3
Target Market	4
Competitor & Reference Games	5
Engine & Platforms	6
Development Tools	6
Project Scope	6
Game Context	7
Game World	7
Playable Entities	8
Game Tone & Atmosphere	8
Game Design	9
Game Vision & Pillars	9
Game Objective	10
Game Flow	11
Player & Game Mechanic	12
Main Menu & Customization Mechanics	16
Lobby System Mechanics	16
Metrics & Systems	17
Player Stats & Combat Metrics	17
Farming & Crop Growth	18
Terrain Effects & Environment	18
Tool Mechanics & Durability	19
Weapons: Damage, Range & Durability	19
Structures & Effects	20
Economy & Shop Pricing	20
Match, Weather & Time Systems	21
Seed Container System	22
UI, Feedback & Extra Info	22
Controllers & Input Mapping	22
Level Design	24
Breezy Meadows	24
Trustfall Island	25

Lucky Island (Arcade Mode)	26
Shared Map Systems & Rules	28
UI/UX Design Overview	28
Title Screen	29
Main Menu UI	29
Options Menu	30
Profile Menu	31
Join Lobby Screen	32
Lobby Scene	33
In-Game HUD	33
Shop UI	34
UX Design	35
Game Assets Overview	36
2D UI Icons & Interface Assets	36
3D Models, Props & Environments	37
Prefabs & Visual Effects	37
Animations	38
Audio Design	39
Monetization & Retention Strategy	40
Monetization Model	40
Currency Systems & Shop	41
Retention Features	41
Branding & Marketing	42
Branding Vision & Mascot Identity	42
Social Media Strategy	43
Community Engagement & Brand Expansion	43
Launch Planning	44

Game Overview

Title: Sapling Wars

Platform: PC (Steam) — Potential port to consoles and Steam Deck

Genre: Multiplayer PvP Farming Arena

Rating: T for Teen (Cartoon Violence, PvP Competition)

Target: Teen and young adult gamers (13–30) who enjoy casual but competitive games that mix resource management and action.

Release Date: TBD

Developers: Gary x Gxplorers Studio

Sapling Wars It's a 3D Multiplayer, Farming Combat Strategy game that blends farming and combat in a fresh, chaotic PvP twist. Teams of up to four players battle to harvest resources, build defenses, and outlast opponents in a 16-player free-for-all.

Designed in Unity and currently available as a Steam demo, the game reimagines farming mechanics for competitive play and build your economy, defend your core, and sabotage others to survive.

Premise

Sapling Wars is a fast-paced multiplayer farming arena where players compete to grow crops, collect resources, upgrade equipment, sabotage opponents, and destroy the enemy Core, all while defending their own. Matches are short, intense, and chaotic, requiring quick thinking, strategy, and adaptability.

Selling Points

-  **Farming Meets PvP Combat:** A unique fusion of crop cultivation and competitive arena battles
-  **Strategic Tools & Weapons:** Use buckets, disguises, crates, pitchforks and more to farm, defend, or sabotage
-  **Resource Control Zones:** Seeds and resources are scattered across the map, forcing players to interact and battle over territory
-  **Dynamic Weather Gameplay:** Weather conditions affect visibility, growth speed, and combat tactics
-  **Multitasking Mastery:** Grow, fight, defend, and sabotage — all at once

- 🌱 **16-Player Arenas:** 4 teams of 4 compete for dominance, allowing solo and team strategies
- 🌱 **Multiple Maps With Unique Layouts:** Includes features like hills, water hazards, fall zones, and terrain obstacles
- 🌱 **Fast-Paced, Replayable Matches:** Designed for short but intense PvP sessions with high replay value

Target Market

Sapling Wars targets:

- Casual-to-core PC players looking for creative, short-session competition
- Players who enjoy team-based coordination or solo strategic chaos
- Fans of farming sims, but craving PvP challenge
- Streamers and content creators who seek chaotic fun for their audience

Demographics:

- Age: 13–30
- Gender: All
- Region: Global, with strong appeal in North America, LATAM, and Europe
- Psychographics: Competitive, creative, social, enjoys quick replayable session

Example:

- **Name:** Alex García
- **Age:** 19
- **Location:** Mexico City, Mexico
- **Occupation:** University student (Digital Media)
- **Budget:** \$100/month for games
- **Hobbies:** Twitch streaming, playing Bed Wars with friends, art, gardening games
- **Favorite Games:** Minecraft (Bed Wars), Overcooked, Fall Guys, Party Animals, Stardew Valley
- **Personality:** Social, expressive, competitive in casual spaces, always looking for games that allow both laughs and skill growth

Competition Games

- **Minecraft – Bed Wars:**
*Primary inspiration;
core-defense mechanics and
sabotage-focused gameplay*
- **Overcooked:** *Chaotic
teamwork and time-pressured
coordination*
- **Party Animals:** *Casual PvP
brawling with strong character
personality and physics*
- **Fall Guys:** *Fast-paced
multiplayer matches with
unpredictable outcomes*



References

Gameplay & Loop Inspiration:

- Minecraft Bed Wars
- Overcooked
- Party Animals
- Gang Beast

Visual Style References:

- Stardew Valley
- Fall Guys
- Party Animals

UI Inspiration:

- Splatoon
- Overcook



Technical Aspects

- **Engine:** Unity 6
- **Scripting Language:** C#
- **Version Control:** GitHub
- **Multiplayer Backend:** Unity Netcode for GameObjects
- **Target Platform:** PC via Steam
- **Art Tools:** Photoshop, Illustrator, Blender (Low Poly 3D style)
- **UI Framework:** Unity UI Toolkit + TextMeshPro



Project Scope

- **Game Type:** PvP Competitive Farming Arena
- **Players:** 1–16 players (1v1, 2v2, 4v4, up to 4 teams of 4)
- **Development Time:** Started in 2023; current phase: Demo
- **Team Size:** 2 core developers (Yibran & Gary – Co-founders of Gxplorers)

Demo Features (as of current build):

- 3 Maps: Breezy Meadows, Trustfall Island, and Lucky Island (Arcade)
- Game Modes: Free For All (Farming), Lucky (Arcade)
- 3 crop types: Pumpkin, Wheat, Watermelon (seed to gold stages)
- Tools: Hoe, Bucket, Lantern, Crate, Map, Disguise
- Weapons: Pitchfork, Scythe
- Core system: Each team defends its Core; losing it ends the match
- Inventory & Quick Slot system
- MiniMap and Fog of War system
- Hills, Water Hazards, Fall Zones (map-specific features)
- Weather system: Rain, Night, Fog affecting vision and crop growth
- Blocks/Defensive Structures: Scarecrow (vision), Hay Block (cover), Upgrade Kit (growth/Core), Greenberry (healing plant), Mines (explosive trap), Cannon (crop-loaded defensive tower)
- Basic Attack: default unarmed, stamina-based attack
- Chicken: ambient roaming AI critter (eats unattended wheat)
- Lucky Box system: random-item crates (Lucky Island / Arcade)
- Throw-range targeting for throwable items

- _ Floor Types: Grass, Dirt, Water
- _ Player Titles system (based on achievements or performance)
- _ Lobby system + Team Selection screen
- _ Basic Main Menu UI

Game Context

Game World

Sapling Wars takes place in a whimsical, semi-chaotic world inspired by nature, farming, and arena combat, but without a specific narrative or lore. The arenas are floating islands, biomes, or artificial nature zones where players (as sapling-like creatures) face off in strategic farming warfare. The tone is playful yet competitive, where bright visuals mask ruthless sabotage and chaos.

While the world isn't defined by traditional storytelling, its personality emerges through:

- Dynamic map environments (e.g., wind, night, fog)
- The physical design of each arena (fall zones, weather, hazards)
- The stylized appearance of the sapling avatars and their customizable gear (hats, masks, backpacks)

Each arena feels like a “test garden” built for player-versus-player farming war, like a televised game show or survival competition but with crops and farming.



Playable Entities (Saplings)

There are no named characters, all players take control of **Saplings**, small bipedal root-based creatures designed to represent speed, mobility, and mischief.

- **Visual Identity:**

- 🌱 Plant-inspired bodies, stubby arms, oversized tools

- 🌱 Emotes, dances, and customizable accessories like hats and masks

- 🌱 Cute, minimalist design, expressive motion and animations

- **Customization:**

- 🌱 Players can change cosmetic items (in future versions)

- 🌱 Titles awarded based on match performance

These saplings aren't individual characters with lore, they are vessels of player creativity and expression.



Game Tone & Atmosphere

Tone: Playfully competitive, chaotic, and humorous with bursts of tension

Aesthetic: Bright colors, soft shading, and clear UI readability

Sound & Feedback: Emphasizes over-the-top effects (bonks, pops, crashes) instead of realism

Player Experience Goals:

- Laugh at the chaos
 - Feel mastery over farming under pressure
 - Engage in sabotage and clever defense
 - Get surprised by random events (weather, falls, explosions)
-

Game Design

Game Vision (Core Design Values)

1. **Farming Under Pressure:** Players must multitask between farming, defending, and attacking in a high-stakes, time-sensitive environment.
2. **Territory Conflict:** Map resources and seeds are limited, forcing constant interaction, sabotage, and map control strategies.
3. **Creative Sabotage:** Players have tools and mechanics specifically designed to mess with enemies, not just kill them.
4. **Fast, Focused, Replayable:** Each match should feel tight, rewarding, and worth repeating with new outcomes and chaos.
5. **Player Expression Through Mechanics:** Tools, customization, and strategy allow every player to play their own way.

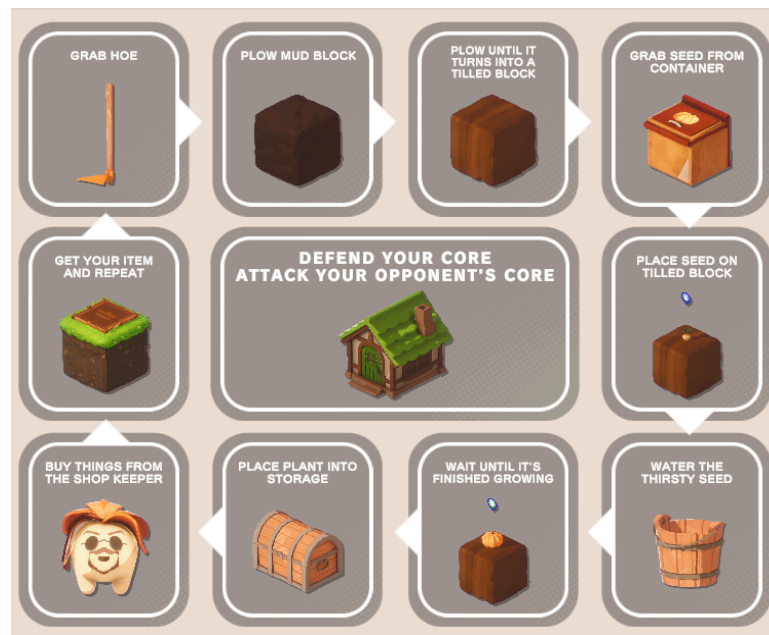
Game Pillars (How Vision is Implemented)

1. **Crop Growth System & Upgrade Cycle:** Farming loop requires watering, harvesting, storing, and selling to progress.
2. **Resource Zone Control & Map Hazards:** Strategic placement of seeds and obstacles forces competitive territory conflict.
3. **Sabotage Tools & Defensive Blocks:** Includes mines, scarecrows, crates, disguises, traps to enable chaos.
4. **Match Pacing & System Feedback:** Designed for short, action-packed matches with clear goal feedback.
5. **Item Variety & Customization:** Tools, outfits, gear, and strategy reflect the player's identity.

Loop and Game Objective

Game Objective

- **Primary Objective:** Destroy all enemy Cores while defending your own.
- **Secondary Objectives:**
 - Harvest and sell crops to earn gold
 - Buy better tools and upgrade your base
 - Control map zones and disrupt enemies



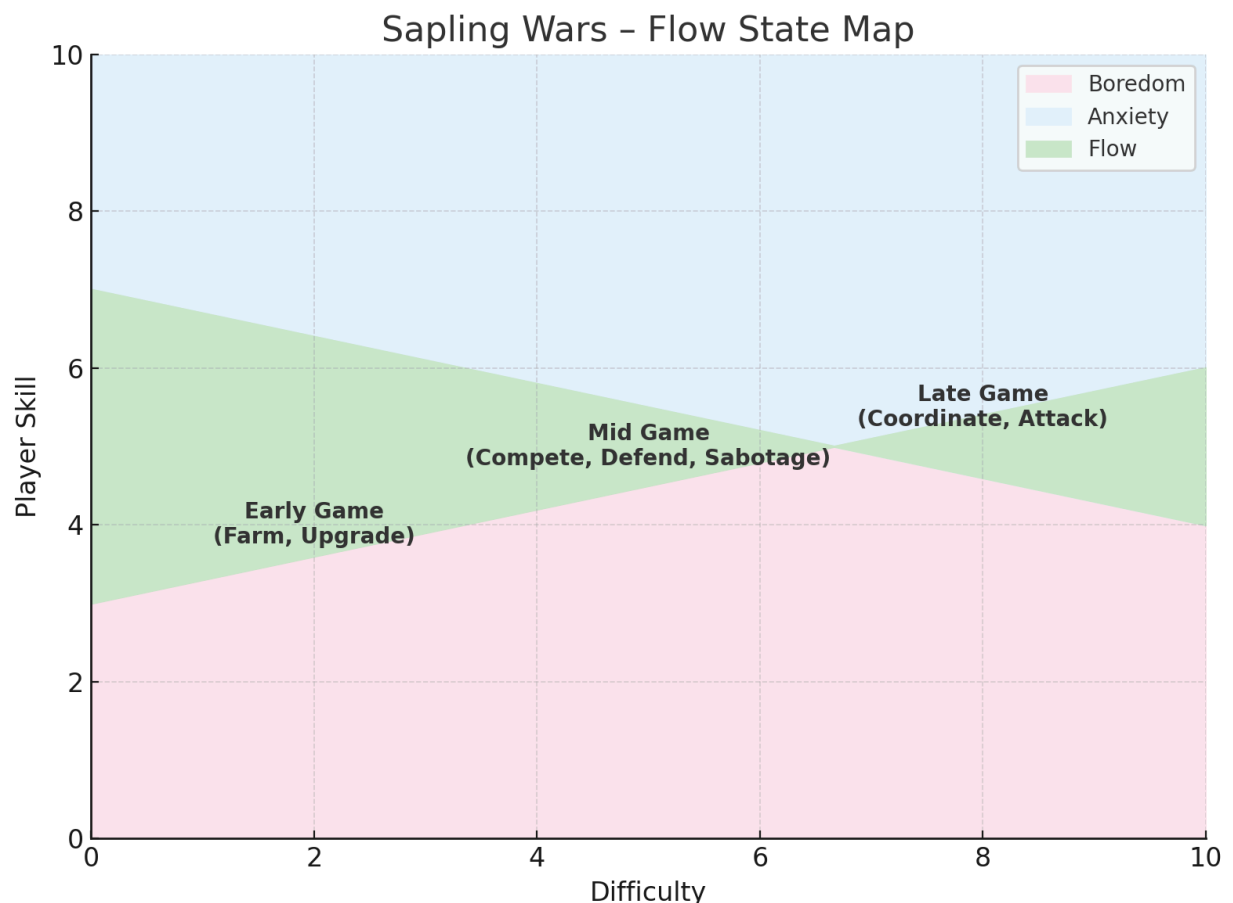
Game Flow

The game is designed around short, chaotic matches with high engagement. Each match flows through:

- **Early Game:** Farm basic crops, upgrade initial tools, set up defenses
- **Mid Game:** Compete for strategic seed zones, defend territory, begin sabotaging rivals
- **Late Game:** Execute coordinated attacks, leverage upgrades, unleash chaos, destroy Cores

Flow State is achieved by:

- Rapid short-term goals (plant, upgrade, sabotage, fight)
- Constant multitasking and team coordination
- Pressure from time limits, enemy threats, and shifting weather
- Emergent strategies, creative decision-making, adapting to map dynamics
- Balanced challenge that keeps the match exciting, without frustration or boredom



Game & Player Mechanics

This section covers all core, secondary, and micro-mechanics that players can interact with in Sapling Wars inside game. Mechanics are categorized for clarity and design implementation.

1. Movement Mechanics

Name	Description
Walk/Run	Default directional movement using keyboard (WASD); affected by floor type
Knockback	Triggered when hit by attacks or explosions, temporarily pushes sapling away

2. Farming Mechanics

Name	Description
Grab Tool	Collect farming tools (Hoe, Bucket, Lantern) from map or purchase blocks
Till Soil	Use Hoe on Mud Blocks to create Tilled Blocks
Plant Seed	Place crop seeds on valid ground types (dirt, soil, grass)
Water Crop	Use Bucket tool to water crops and begin their growth cycle
Grow Stages	Crops go through stages: Seed → Needs Water → Growing → Harvest
Harvest Crop	Place harvested crops into team Storage to accumulate resources
Storage Use	Sell crops at your Base or via Shopkeeper to earn Gold
Upgrade Farming	Use Upgrade Kit on tilled plots to speed up crop growth (max x2 upgrades)

Throw / Throw Range	Throwable items show a circular range indicator; reach scales with item weight (light = full, tools ~75%, cannon ~15%)
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3. Tools & Items

Item	Function
Hoe	Tills Mud Blocks into Tilled Blocks
Bucket	Fills with water at Water Blocks or rain, used to water plants
Lantern	Lights up dark areas or night conditions
Crate	Holds up to 6 crops or seeds; throwable
Map	Reveals top-down view of full arena and player positions
Disguise	Temporarily change appearance to another team
Upgrade Kit	Applied to Tilled Blocks to boost plant growth speed (up to 2 levels)

4. Combat & Sabotage Mechanics

Name	Description
Equip Weapon	Pick up melee weapons (Pitchfork: direct stab / Scythe: AoE swipe)
Knockout Enemies	Weapons cause damage and knockback; can eliminate players temporarily
Destroy Core	Attack enemy team's Core, destroying it eliminates the team
Use Disguise	Disguise as another team to infiltrate and sabotage undetected
Hide in Bush	Conceal yourself to ambush or evade players

Steal Crops	Take crops from enemy fields, storage, or crates
Place Mines	Explodes on contact (not triggered by teammates)
Basic Attack	Default unarmed attack with no weapon equipped; low damage, stamina-limited

5. Defensive Structures & Traps

Name	Description
Scarecrow	Reveals enemy positions within radius, fragile
Hay Bale	Blocks paths, only team members can pass through
Land Mine	Explodes on contact (not triggered by teammates)
Greenberry	Restores health when collected; respawns on cooldown
Cannon (Tower)	Player-placed tower firing crop-based projectiles at enemy players; higher crops hit harder, loses HP per shot, can miss

6. Environmental & World Interaction

Name	Description
Terrain Types	Grass, Stone, Dirt, Mud, Water each affects movement and placement
Water Block	Drown if idle too long, items sink and are destroyed
Mud Block	Causes sinking, turns into tillable land with Hoe
Bushes (Stealth)	Hide inside to avoid detection

Seed Containers	Generate plant seeds periodically; shows countdown and seed count
Clear Weather	Normal visibility; no effect on farming or combat
Light Rain	Fills buckets and waters crops passively, boosting farming efficiency
Heavy Rain	Buckets auto-fill, crops watered, but visibility is reduced
Chicken	Passive roaming critter; can't be hurt, avoids water, eats unattended wheat and blocks chests it stands on
Lucky Box	Breakable crate (Lucky Island only) that spawns a random item from the full drop pool when destroyed

7. In-Game UI, Inventory & HUD

Name	Description
Inventory	Stores seeds, crops, tools, and weapons
Pick Up / Drop	RMB / A – interact with objects
Use	LMB / B – activate tools, weapons, or special items
Chat	ENTER / L3 – send team/global messages
Emotes	T / D-Pad Up – use fun visual emotes
Ping	C / D-Pad Down – alert team of position or object
Scoreboard	TAB / Select – view ongoing match stats
Pause Menu	ESC / Start – opens settings menu
Day/Night Toggle	Visual UI elements for time of day can be toggled in options

Main Menu UI Mechanics

This section covers all core, secondary, and micro-mechanics that players can interact with in Sapling Wars inside Main Menu.

Element	Description
Play Button	Opens matchmaking, lobby creation, or quick join options
Profile & Stats	Access username, match history, total stats (damage, kills, assists, deaths, time played)
Titles & Customization	Players can select unlocked titles to showcase in-game
Help & Tutorial	Opens “How to Play” instructions, control scheme, UI tooltips
Game Options	Includes: - Audio (Master, Music, SFX volume sliders) - Video (Fullscreen toggle, Resolution dropdown, VSync toggle) - Controls (Keybindings for movement, actions, emotes, ping, etc.) - Interface Toggles (Hide player names, KO banner, day/night UI, chat UI, ping, etc.)

Lobby System Mechanics

This section covers all core, secondary, and micro-mechanics that players can interact with in Sapling Wars inside join Lobby scene and lobby.

1. Lobby Creation & Join Menu

Element	Description
Create Lobby	Opens public or private lobby setup
Join Code Input	Allows joining private lobbies via shared code
Lobby Name	Set a name visible to all players

2. Lobby Room Scene

Element	Description
Team Selection	Choose between four team colors (green, blue, red, yellow)
Lobby Code Display	Shows sharable lobby code
Ready Button	Players click Ready to signal match start
Player Counter	Displays connected players (e.g. 6/16)
Map Selection	Choose between: Breezy Meadows, Trustfall Island, Lucky Island, or Random

Metrics & Systems

This section outlines the core game systems, balancing metrics, item values, and stat progression in Sapling Wars. Values reflect the current build. Entries marked provisional are pending a dedicated balancing pass.

1. Player Stats & Combat Metrics

Attribute	Value	Notes
Max Health	100 HP (Up to 250 via upgrades)	Base player health
Movement Speed	7.5 units/sec	Normal terrain
Mud Movement Speed	3.75 units/sec	Movement halved on mud

Respawn Time	3 seconds	Respawn counter shown on screen
Basic Attack Damage	Low (provisional)	~10–15 hits to KO a base 100 HP player
Basic Attack Cooldown	~0.5 sec	Time between basic attacks
Basic Attack Stamina	~10 attacks before depletion (provisional)	Regenerates over time; not a hard durability
Shield Damage Mitigation	15%	Active shields reduce incoming damage by 15%
Player Size	2 units tall (Unity scale)	For interaction/hitbox purposes
Greenberry Heal	+25 HP	Heals instantly on use
Drown in Water	3 seconds	Causes death
Drown in Mud	8 seconds (4 w/ item held)	Causes death

2. Farming & Crop Growth

Crop	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total Time	Notes
Wheat	30 sec	30 sec	30 sec	90 sec	Standard early-game crop
Pumpkin	45 sec	45 sec	45 sec	135 sec	Used in advanced tools and healing
Watermelon	60 sec	60 sec	60 sec	180 sec	Highest-tier crop
Greenberry	60 sec	60 sec	60 sec	180 sec	Usable as healing item at Stage 3

3. Terrain Effects & Environmental Conditions

Terrain Type	Speed Multiplier	Other Effects
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Grass/Dirt	1.0x	Default terrain
Mud	0.5x	Slows movement, causes drowning
Water	0x	3 sec to drown

4. Tool Mechanics & Durability

Tool	Swings to Till	Durability (Full Blocks)	Price
Bronze Hoe	10	4	3 wheat seeds
Silver Hoe	7	10	—
Gold Hoe	4	25	—

- *Durability only depletes on completing full tilling actions.*

5. Weapons: Damage, Range & Durability

Weapon	Damage	Range (Units)	Area of Effect	Durability	Price
Bronze Pitchfork	25–30	2	Frontal arc	10	6 grown wheat
Silver Pitchfork	25–30	2	Frontal arc	25	3 grown wheat + 5 grown pumpkin
Gold Pitchfork	25–30	2	Frontal arc	50	3 grown pumpkin + 6 watermelon
Bronze Scythe	10–15	5	360° AoE	10	6 grown wheat
Silver Scythe	10–15	5	360° AoE	25	3 grown wheat + 5 grown pumpkin

Gold Scythe	10–15	5	360° AoE	50	3 grown pumpkin + 6 watermelon
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- *Durability decreases only on successful hits.*
- *Scythe depletes faster due to wider AoE.*

6. Placeable Structures & Effects

Object	Health	Radius / AoE	Effect	Price
Hay Bale	100 HP	1 block	Defensive wall	3 grown wheat
Scarecrow	10 HP	7 units	Alerts team, detects through walls (vs Disguise)	3 grown wheat
Land Mine	—	3 units AoE	Triggers 100 damage on contact	1 grown pumpkin
Greenberry Plant	—	—	Grows healing item (+25 HP)	3 wheat seeds + 3 watermelon seeds
Upgrade Kit	—	—	Speeds up nearby crop growth	2 grown wheat
Cannon (Tower)	~250 HP (provisional)	Projectile range (provisional)	Fires crop-based projectiles at enemy players only; damage scales with crop tier (approx. 5 / 10 / 15); loses HP per shot; recharges between reloads	

7. Economy & Shop Pricing

Category	Item	Price (Crop Types)	Function
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Tools	Bucket	3 wheat seeds	Used to water crops
	Crate	3 grown wheat + 3 grown pumpkin	Stores up to 6 items
Utility	Lantern	2 wheat seeds	Provides light in darkness
	Map	3 grown wheat	Reveals terrain on map
	Disguise	3 grown watermelon	Temporarily disguises as enemy team
Base	Recover Core HP	3 grown wheat	Heals base +100
	Recover Core Shield	2 grown watermelon	Adds +50 shield
	Increase Core HP	5 grown pumpkin	Raises max HP +50
	Increase Core Shield	5 grown watermelon	Raises max shield +50
Player	Recover Health	2 grown wheat	Heals player +100
	Recover Shield	2 grown pumpkin	Grants +25 shield
	Increase Max HP	5 grown watermelon	Raises player max HP +25
	Increase Max Shield	5 grown pumpkin	Raises player max shield +25
Special	Mud Walkers	18 grown watermelon	Grants full movement on mud

8. Match, Weather & Time Systems

System	Duration / Behavior	Notes
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Day/Night	5 min day / 5 min night	Affects lighting and lantern usage
Weather Change	Every 60 sec	Randomly selects new weather
Weather Duration	120 sec	May repeat same condition for longer
Match Time	No limit	Endless until base is destroyed
Inventory	No limit	Players can carry unlimited items

9. Seed Container System

- Max Capacity: 6 seeds
- UI: Number indicator + yellow countdown bar for refill
- New Seed Interval: Fixed timer (exact seconds TBD)

10. UI, Feedback & Extra Info

- Respawn Timer: Appears after player death (3 sec)
- Disguise Timer: Disguise ends on damage or duration
- Seed Bar: Visual countdown for next available seed
- Weather Icon: Displays current weather effect
- Base Stats UI: Core HP and shield shown near base



Controllers & Input Mapping

This section defines all in-game controls for both keyboard and gamepad, helping players and developers understand how to interact with the game world.

Keyboard Controls

Action	Key
Move Up	W
Move Left	A
Move Right	D
Move Down	S
Pick Up / Drop	Right Mouse Btn
Use / Interact	Left Mouse Btn
Next Item	E
Previous Item	Q
Pause Menu	Escape
Scoreboard	Tab
Chat	Enter
Emote	T
Ping	C

Controller Controls

Action	Button
Move Up	Left Stick Up
Move Left	Left Stick Left
Move Right	Left Stick Right
Move Down	Left Stick Down
Pick Up / Drop	A
Use / Interact	B
Next Item	RB
Previous Item	LB
Pause Menu	Start
Scoreboard	Select
Chat	Left Stick Press
Emote	D-Pad Up
Ping	D-Pad Down



Level Design (Maps Overview)

This section presents the detailed layout, gameplay purpose, and core design philosophy behind the maps in *Sapling Wars*. Each map is crafted to provide a distinct strategic experience while maintaining the same core gameplay loop and match objectives.

Map 1: Breezy Meadows



Overview

- Theme: Countryside farmland with lush greenery, rivers, and ambient light.
- Size: Large
- Players: 2 to 4 players per team, up to 4 teams (16 players total)
- Weather: Clear, Light Rain, Heavy Rain
- Cycle: Day and Night

Layout Features

- Four Symmetrical Bases: Located in each corner. Each base contains:
 - Core
 - Spawn point

- Shop Keeper
- Wheat seed container
- Storage Inventory
- Small pond (water source)
- Bushes for hiding
- Central Mud Zone: A muddy zone in the center holds the only Watermelon seed container, incentivizing conflict and interaction.
- Pumpkin Containers: Four total, placed between each base and the center in muddy terrain.
- Water Bodies: Rivers cut the map edges, requiring navigation or bridge use.

Strategic Notes

- Encourages team coordination and mid-map control.
- Strong defense vs. rush decision-making.
- Teams must venture into mud and enemy lines to access vital resources.
- Mud navigation forces tool usage and strategic tiling with hoes.
- Bushes near bases allow stealth tactics.
- High heat zone around central watermelon container.
- Sightlines are broken by terrain curves and trees, allowing ambushes.
- Pumpkin containers are visible from nearby mud, acting as waypoints and signifiers.
- Water and mud act as affordances, indicating drowning hazard or slow movement.

Map 2: Trustfall Island



Overview

- Theme: Small tropical island surrounded by ocean, with palm trees and a sunny climate.
- Size: Small
- Players: 2 to 4 players per team, 2 to 4 teams
- Weather: Clear, Light Rain, Heavy Rain
- Cycle: Day and Night

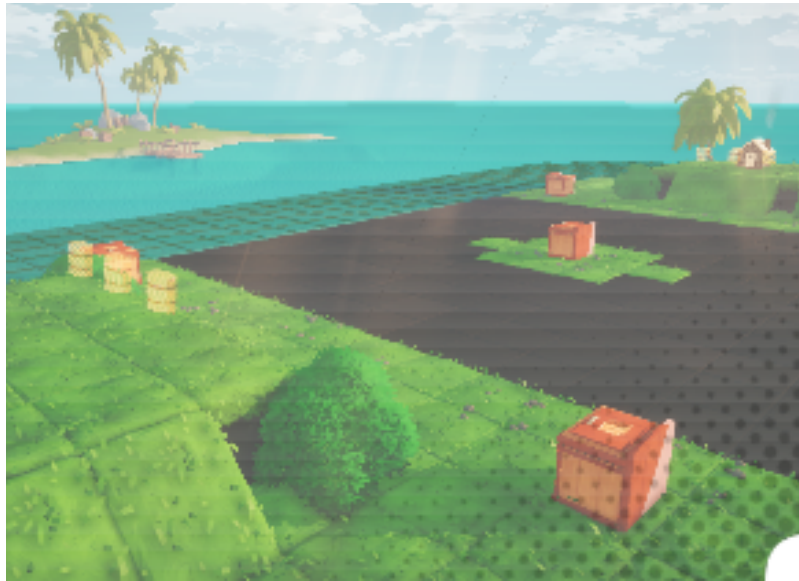
Layout Features

- Four Bases: Two on the left, two on the right.
 - Each includes a core, shop keeper, storage, and wheat container.
 - Small bushes allow hiding and disguise mechanics.
- Top & Bottom Corners: Contain Pumpkin seed containers.
- Center Area: Contains two Watermelon seed containers, promoting quick confrontations.
- Full Water Surrounding: True island design; water defines map limits and escape zones.

Strategic Notes

- Ideal for fast-paced matches with small teams.
- Focus on early aggression and compact defense.
- Encourages quick mobility, but risky center control.
- Water border acts as a natural hazard and visual boundary.
- Central zone is a heat map hotspot, with high sapling conflict frequency.
- Shorter sightlines due to trees and terrain, making lanterns and scouting tools valuable.
- Pumpkin containers at corners serve as visual anchors and resource goals.
- Wayfinding supported by the symmetry and coastal shape of the map.

Map 3: Lucky Island (Arcade Mode)



Overview

- Theme: Compact, flat arcade arena. No farmland, pure chaos.
- Size: Small
- Players: 2 to 4 players per team, 2 to 4 teams
- Mode: Arcade (Lucky), selectable from Map Selection alongside the standard maps
- Weather: Clear, Light Rain, Heavy Rain
- Cycle: Day and Night

Layout Features

- Flat, open layout with no farming infrastructure: no shop, no planting, watering, harvesting, or crop economy.
- Lucky Boxes replace all seed containers. Breaking one spawns a random item from the full drop pool.
- All gear and resources come from luck, not farming.

Strategic Notes

- Built for short, high-chaos matches where anything goes.
- Outcome driven by luck and reaction speed instead of economy management.
- Reference feel: ARAM (League of Legends) and Lucky Block modes (Minecraft).
- Strips the farming learning curve for a pure free-for-all, ideal for quick sessions and spectator hype.

Shared Map Systems & Rules

Element	Behavior / Description
Seed Containers	Limited to 6 seeds. Visible countdown bar indicates regeneration progress.
Cores	Located at each base. Destroying enemy cores wins the match.
Shop Keepers	Each base has one. Allows crafting of tools, upgrades, and defenses.
Inventory Crates	Storage for team items. Always placed at spawn zones.
Water Access	Each base has a small pond. Buckets fill automatically during rain.
Day/Night Cycle	Alternates every 5 minutes. Affects visibility and lantern usage.
Weather System	Changes every 60 seconds. Weather effects last 120 seconds and can repeat.
Bushes	Present near bases; allow players to hide and remain unseen.
Mud Terrain	Slows player movement unless tilled with hoes.
Drowning Zones	Water and deep mud can drown players in 3–8 seconds based on conditions.
Sightlines	Designed to be semi-obstructed to encourage ambushes and tension.
Landmarks	Each seed type container and shop act as waypoints and signifiers for navigation.

UI/UX Design Overview

This section breaks down the complete user interface and experience for *Sapling Wars*, covering all interactive screens and gameflow touchpoints. The style is pixel-based, intuitive, and playful, supporting both competitive clarity and lighthearted strategy.

UI Style & Direction

- **Theme:** Clean, minimalistic cartoon pixel art with soft gradients and background patterns.
- **Inspiration:** Splatoon (phone-style UI), Party Animals (simple, clean, friendly), Mario Wonder (gradients and background texture).
- **Font:** Chunky pixel-readable font for core UI, thin-pixel type for subtext.
- **Colors:** UI tones match game resources (wheat = yellow, pumpkin = orange, watermelon = red, berry = green).
- **Feedback:** Click sounds, hover highlights, subtle animations (bouncing buttons, expanding menus).

1. Title Screen

- Background with animated sky/weather.
- **Top-Left:** Game title and version number.
- **Center:** "Click to Start" prompt.
- Clicking transitions to the Main Menu.



2. Main Menu UI

- **Top-Left:** Profile banner showing player name.
- **Top-Right:** Gear icon for Options Menu.
- **Bottom-Right:** Steam message prompt to Wishlist *Sapling Wars*.
- **Bottom-Center:** Large **Play** button.



Options Menu (Also Pause Menu In-Game)

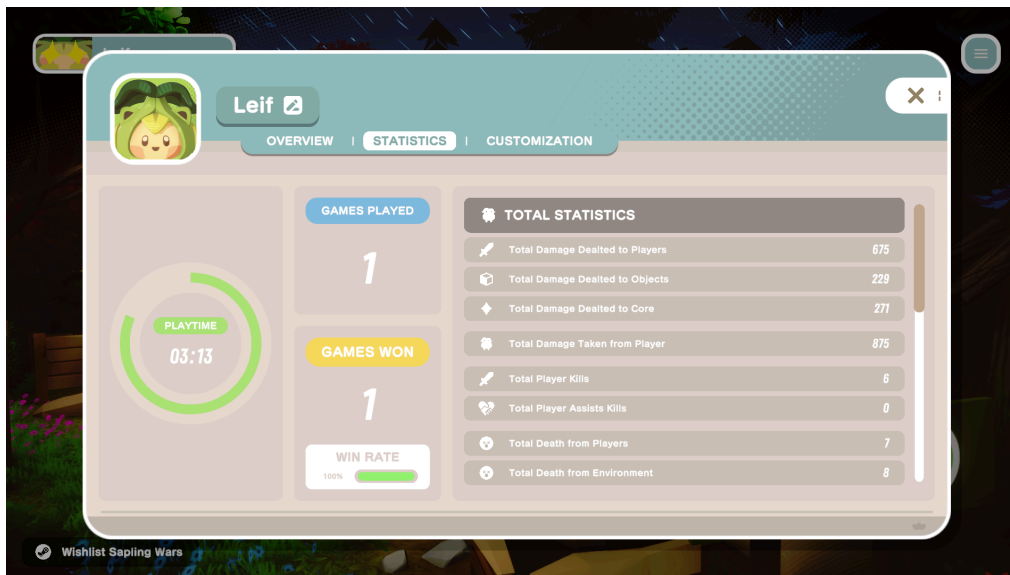
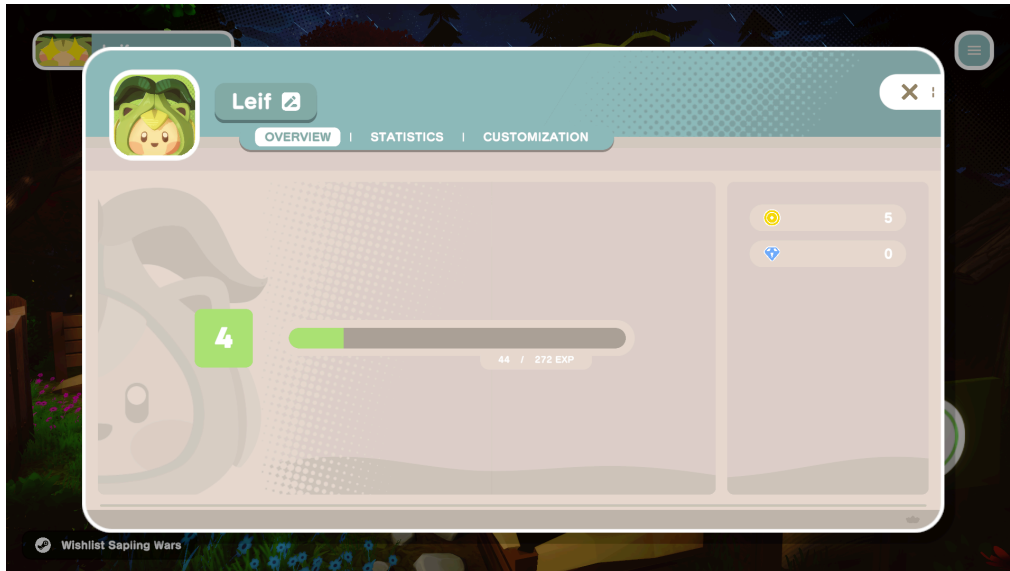
Styled like a phone interface with app-like buttons:

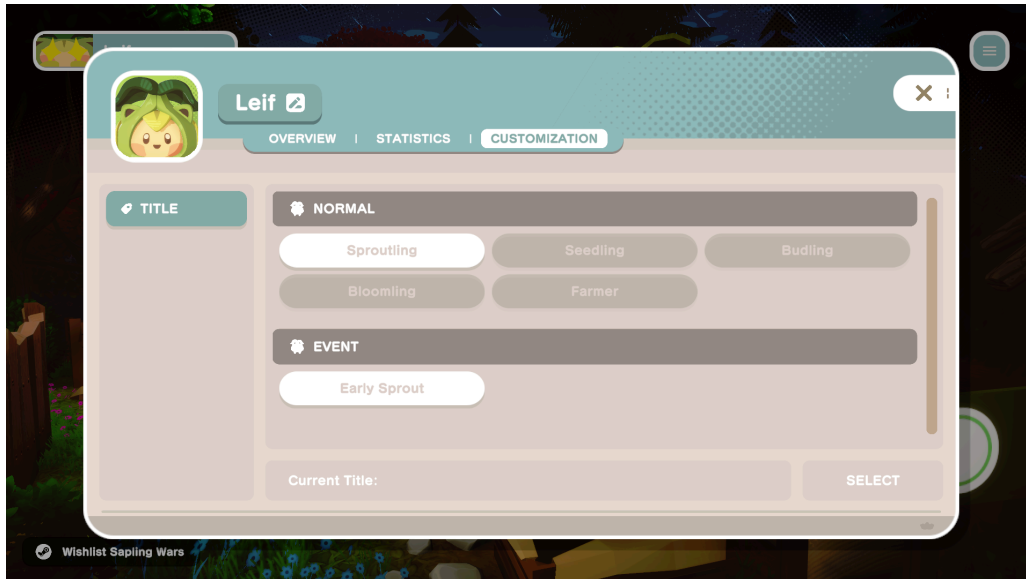
- **Time displayed** at the top.
- **Resume**
- **Tutorial** (launch training match or info)
- **Help** (opens guide or FAQ)
- **Options** (sub-tabs: Video, Audio, Controls, UI toggles)
- **Quit**



Profile Menu

- **Editable Player Name**
- **Sections:**
 - **Overview:** Player level, coins, hard currency (diamonds).
 - **Statistics:** Playtime, games played, win rate, damage dealt, deaths, kills, watered seeds, planted seeds, stored items.
 - **Customization:** Future unlocks—titles, hats, skins, nameplates.





3. Join Lobby Screen

- Left Panel: List of current available lobbies
 - Displays lobby name, player count, map, join button
- **Quick Join** button
- **Enter Code** input field
- **Create Lobby** button:
 - Pop-up lets you name the lobby
 - Select Public/Private + password input if private



4. Lobby Scene

- **3D Lobby Environment:** Changes depending on selected map
- **Top-Left:** Leave button
- **Top-Middle:** Lobby name, code, team selector (color & team size), player count
- **Top-Right:** Ready button
- **Middle-Left:** Map selector tab
- Players move around physically in the lobby space



5. In-Game HUD

Minimal HUD Philosophy

- Most UI elements appear as floating visuals above objects/players:
 - **Player/Core HP Bars** (above character/core)
 - **Crop Timers** (icons or countdowns)
 - **Containers** show remaining seeds visually
 - **Buckets** show water levels with water icons
 - **Inventory Crates** show contained items

Persistent HUD

- **Top-Left:** Day/Night and Weather Indicator
- No health/resource bar on screen unless contextually required



6. Shop UI

- Divided by tabs:
 - Tools
 - Weapons
 - Blocks
 - Core Items
 - Player Upgrades
- Each entry shows:
 - Item Icon
 - Name
 - Description
 - Cost (with resource icons)
 - Buy Button



UX Design

- Minimalism & Clarity: Avoid clutter. All vital information is context-sensitive or diegetic (floating UI over game objects).
- Onboarding: New players can access a tutorial anytime from the main or pause menu.
- Affordance & Signifiers:
 - Interactive containers glow subtly when available.
 - Bushes in bases visually indicate cover/hiding.
 - Mud/water is visually distinct, with slow-down or drowning feedback.
 - Containers and enemy cores are positioned to promote mid-map interaction and flow.
- Feedback & Responsiveness:
 - Every action gives audible, visual, and animation-based feedback.
 - Buttons bounce or light up; seeds give particle effects when watered or harvested.
- Wayfinding & Sightlines:
 - Strategic container and obstacle placement ensures players can see where to go next.
 - Pumpkin containers are partially visible from safe zones, hinting direction.
 - Core and team structures act as landmarks.
- Heatmap & Conflict Zones:
 - Watermelon seed containers at map center ensure natural conflict zones.
 - Bushes promote stealthy ambushes and defense.
- Cognitive Load Management:
 - Visual hierarchy (larger buttons, icons, spacing)
 - Players only see what matters: timers, HP, and resource icons float near interactables.
- Accessibility:
 - Clear font, high contrast UI elements
 - Controller support
 - Minimal reliance on text alone for crucial mechanics

Game Assets Overview

This section catalogs the in-game assets used in *Sapling Wars*, covering all visual, audio, 3D, animation, and special effects content required to deliver a rich and coherent experience. Each asset category supports gameplay functionality and contributes to the clarity, charm, and responsiveness of the game.

2D & Sprite Assets

References: *Splatoon*, *Party Animals*, *Mario Wonder*, *Stardew Valley*, *Kirby*

Main Menu

- Title screen UI (logo/title, version, "Click to Start")
- Main menu UI: Profile banner, Play button, Steam wishlist note, Options button
- Background for pause/settings (3 Saplings artwork)
- Coin and diamond currency icons



Lobby

- Join/Create lobby interface
- Pop-up windows for lobby name, public/private option
- Lobby HUD: Leave, Ready, Map selector, Team selection UI

In-Game

- HUD: Time of Day icon, Weather icon
- Health bars (Player, Core)
- Growth stage indicators (crops)
- Water bucket UI (water level)
- Inventory crate and crop contents UI
- Shop UI with tabs (Tools, Weapons, Blocks, Core, Player)
- Shop product entries (name, description, price, buy button)

Tutorial / Help

- Illustrated help/tutorial images:
 - Core, seed containers, plants, shopkeeper, storage
 - Tools, weapons, blocks
 - Mud, water, tilled blocks, weather effects
- UI icons: Plus buttons, dots, keys, sapling silhouettes

3D Models & Props

References: *Kirby, Forager, Crossy Road, Animal Crossing*

Main Menu

- Sapling model with sleep animation
- Decorative trees and background elements

Lobby

- Lobby sapling spawn platforms
- Background environments:
 - *Breezy Meadows*: House, fences, rocks, bridge, bushes, lamp posts
 - *Trustfall Island*: Palm trees, beach terrain

In-Game

- Sapling player models (with facial expressions)
- Shopkeeper NPC
- Core object
- Water pond
- Inventory chest
- Seed containers: Wheat, Pumpkin, Watermelon, Greenberry
- Crates, Buckets, Scarecrows, Mines, Hay Bales
- Disguise bush
- Environment blocks: Mud, Water, Tilled blocks



Prefabs

Note: *Nearly all gameplay assets are prefabs maintained in a Unity test scene for map consistency.*

Gameplay Core Prefabs

- Player
- Core system
- Shopkeeper
- Inventory chest
- Seed Containers (all types)
- Water, mud, tilled ground tiles
- Tools and weapons
- Hay Bales, Scarecrows, Mines, Crates
- Disguise bush prefab
- Spawning point and placement area

Visual Effects (VFX)

References: Party Animals, Overcooked

Main Menu & Lobby

- Sky transitions and time-of-day lighting
- Shooting stars effect
- Particle leaves on screen

Game World

- Wind dust while walking
- Shop smoke when item appears
- Particle effects for tilling, watering, harvesting
- Pitchfork stab & scythe slash particles
- Player damage, tool break, core hit effects
- Mine explosion smoke and shockwave
- Hay breaking, scarecrow alert ping & destruction
- Sapling death soul and respawn sparkle

Animations

References: Splatoon, Party Animals, Animal Crossing

Main Menu

- Camera zoom (title → menu)
- Sleeping sapling
- Trees and plants swaying

Lobby

- Sapling idle and walk
- Shopkeeper idle
- Background elements animated

In-Game

- Intro camera pan & map name
- Hoe tilling, seed container open, bucket scoop
- Watering, seed planting, crate carry
- Drowning (mud/water), death and respawn
- Pitchfork and scythe attacks
- Disguise transform
- Inventory and map top-view
- Shopkeeper placing item
- Hay lift/drop, scarecrow alert
- Sapling expressions: angry, sad, hurt, happy

Audio

References: *Party Animals, Overcooked, Animal Crossing*

Music

- Main Menu theme
- Lobby ambient music
- Breezy Meadows – Day / Night themes
- Trustfall Island – Day / Night themes
- Shopkeeper theme

Sound Effects

- Ambient: Birds, wind
- Alerts: Core under attack, scarecrow ping
- Player: Tool swings, water scoop, crate grab
- Events: Buying, tool/hay/scarecrow break, disguise change
- Combat: Hit, damage, scythe/pitchfork swing
- Misc: Drowning, respawn, victory/defeat jingles

Monetization & Retention Strategy

This section outlines the current and planned monetization and retention strategies for Sapling Wars. The approach follows a fair, player-friendly system inspired by titles like Fall Guys (pre-Epic Games) and Party Animals. No pay-to-win mechanics will be included.

Monetization Principles

- No pay-to-win mechanics
- Cosmetics only — all gameplay mechanics and features unlocked by default
- Fair and rewarding grind progression
- Transparent pricing and currency conversion
- No loot boxes or gacha systems

Game Pricing (Core Model)

- **Base Price:**
 - \$8–10 USD (subject to platform/store fees and regional adjustment)
 - **Estimated Currency Equivalents:**
 - **MXN:** \$139–179 pesos
 - **CAD:** \$10.99–13.49 CAD
 - **EUR:** €7.99–9.49
 - **Model:**
 - One-time purchase (premium model)
 - Includes full access to all maps, game modes, and base cosmetics
 - No ads or locked features on launch
-

Future Monetization Additions (Post-Launch)

These features are not implemented at launch, but are considered for future updates based on player base size, engagement, and server cost sustainability.

A. Battle Pass (Seasonal)

- **Structure:**
 - Cosmetic reward track

- Free + Premium tiers
- Earn skins, hats, visual trails, animations, emotes, titles, currency
- **Season Duration:** ~2 months
- **Cost:** TBD (estimated \$5–7 USD)
- **Reward types:** XP-based progression from gameplay and challenges

B. Item Shop

- **Rotation:**
 - Daily and Weekly cosmetic rotations
- **Content:**
 - Cosmetic items: Hats, Emotes, Sapling expressions, Visual effects, Player titles
 - Limited-time or themed items
- **Currencies used:**
 - **Sap-Coins (Soft Currency):** Earned in matches/challenges
 - **Sap-Gems (Hard Currency):** Purchased with real money
 - **Saplings (Rare Currency):** Replaces “Crowns”. Earned from wins and rare events. Used for legendary cosmetics

C. In-Game Currencies

- **Sap-Coins (Soft Currency):**
 - Earned by playing matches, completing challenges
 - Used in shop for common cosmetics
- **Sap-Gems (Hard Currency):**
 - Purchased with real money
 - Used for premium cosmetics and Battle Pass
- **Saplings (Rare Currency):**
 - Awarded for tournament wins, special milestones, or event achievements
 - Used to unlock rare cosmetics and animated skins

Retention Methods

Drawing inspiration from *Fall Guys*, *Party Animals*, and *Splatoon*, retention systems will encourage short- and long-term engagement without pressure.

A. Daily & Weekly Missions

- Simple goals like: “Plant 10 seeds”, “Win a match”, “Tilt 15 tiles”, etc.
- Rewards: XP, Sap-Coins, and progress toward Battle Pass

B. Login Streak Rewards

- Reward consistent play with daily login bonuses (soft currency, shop discounts, titles, etc.)
- Weekly milestones unlock larger bonuses

C. Event-Based Challenges

- Themed around holidays, updates, or new maps
- Time-limited with exclusive rewards and cosmetics

D. Rotating Shop + Time-Limited Items

- Daily and weekly rotations build FOMO without forcing purchases
- Highlighted items or bundles appear with featured art

E. Seasonal Updates

- Each season includes new cosmetics, balance tweaks, and gameplay surprises
- Maps may include small seasonal decorations (snow, summer lights, etc.)

Branding & Marketing

This section outlines the initial branding and marketing plans for Sapling Wars, focusing on visibility, community-building, and long-term interest leading toward launch and beyond.

Branding Vision

Tone & Personality:

- Fun, quirky, and strategic
- Inspired by playful chaos with depth (like Fall Guys, Splatoon, Party Animals)
- Friendly, cartoonish, competitive

Visual Identity:

- Bright, saturated color palette (natural greens, rich earth tones, and vibrant plant colors)
- Hand-drawn logo with natural elements (sapling, leaves, roots)
- Iconography consistent across all platforms: sapling silhouettes, dirt mounds, seeds, etc.
- UI and marketing visual style aligned with in-game design (minimalist, playful, clean)

Mascot/Character:

- Sapling avatars will be the face of the brand
- Emotes, expressions, and accessories will help make them iconic and marketable

Social Media Plan

Primary Platforms

- **X (Twitter):** Devlog updates, memes, community polls, art shares, retweeting fan content
- **TikTok:** Fast-paced gameplay clips, behind-the-scenes devlog, meme trends, community responses
- **BlueSky:** Indie dev updates, development milestones, indie collabs

Content Types

- Developer diaries (quick visual or captioned updates)
- Game design breakdowns (explaining fun mechanics)
- Sapling of the Week (community shoutouts)
- Polls, memes, interactions to increase engagement
- Build-up to milestones (demo, alpha test, wishlist push)

Influencer & Creator Outreach

- Reach out to family-friendly creators who play party games, indie gems, or team-based multiplayer
- Offer early access or demo builds
- Create an influencer program (private Discord, feedback access, free codes, early updates)
- Target niche communities (cozy games, competitive lighthearted PvP)

Launch Planning

Wishlist Campaign (Steam)

- Visual banners, gifs, and short clips for maximum appeal
- Emphasis on "chaotic fun with friends"
- "Wishlist now" CTA used in every content piece

Kickstarter (Planned)

- Not launched yet, but under consideration
- Possible tiers (ideas only, TBD):
 - \$5 – Digital Wallpaper Pack
 - \$15 – Game Key
 - \$30 – Exclusive Cosmetic Pack
 - \$60 – Name a Sapling NPC
 - \$100+ – Early tester role + Artbook PDF
 - Stretch goals may include additional maps, community-voted cosmetics, or seasonal event mode

Future Goals

- Super Indie Games 2026
- Partnerships with other indie games or dev collectives
- Consideration for festivals (Steam Next Fest,ect)