

1881. Heracleum Mantegazzianum

Background

Victorian Era. A threat to all humanity arrives from the English countryside. Some specimens of the dreadful Heracleum Mantegazzianum, also known as giant hogweed, have been spotted. These specimens grow enormously day by day and reproduce just as quickly, rapidly infesting large areas and killing the helpless inhabitants of those regions with their miasma.

An expedition of Mounted Explorers, followed by several battalions of hussars, infantry, and artillery, is arriving at the location. Their task is to eradicate the malignant plant with whatever they have at their disposal: sabers, bayonets, cannons, and bare hands. However, the plants defend themselves with their deadly miasma. There are military structures (fortresses) and civilian structures (hospital, mine, farms, residential districts) in the area.

Active parts of the game include the fortresses (from which hogweed specimens can be spotted and bombarded) and some civilian structures (as will be clarified later). It is essential to keep the railway station operational because further reinforcements from the capital will arrive through it. Then, additional resistance will be needed, as the central command is preparing a fleet of balloons equipped for bombarding the specimens.

Game Mechanics

Movement/Reinforcement Phase At the beginning of each turn (day), the map of the area appears. On the right side, there is information about:

- Day
- Weather conditions
- (If it is a windy day) Type of wind (north wind, northeast wind, etc.)

On the map, the following are represented:

- Countryside areas (green squares)
- Hilly areas (light blue squares)
- Swampy areas (light brown squares)
- Civilian structures (white dots)
- Military structures (red circles)

A white heart (symbol for units, shown one at a time) can be seen on the map. Below the map, the following information about the unit is provided:

- Type of unit (Explorers, Hussars, Artillery, Infantry)
- Cardinal number (from 1 to 6) identifying the unit
- Number of soldiers

- Visual range
- x coordinate
- y coordinate
- Type of terrain

On the right, below the weather conditions, the player is asked what they want to do:

- Move (N,S,W,E)
- Get reinforcements (R)
- Pass to the next unit without doing anything (X)

If N,S,W,E is pressed, the unit will move in one of the four cardinal directions. The extent of the movement (DS) depends on the weather conditions, the type of unit, and the type of terrain the unit is on (movements in urban districts will be broader than those in the countryside or swampy areas). If R is pressed, the unit will get reinforcements, the amount of which depends on the state of the fortresses. Reinforcements come from a reserve pool, which might run out (as will be clarified later). Pressing X moves to the next unit without doing anything.

Spotting and Combat Each unit checks if there are any specimens within its visual range. If a specimen is spotted for the first time, the unit notifies the central command. If that specimen is not destroyed, it will appear on the map in the next turn. The coordinates are transmitted via carrier pigeon or heliograph (the latter if the unit is in a hilly area).

The distance and the growth stage of the specimen are indicated. If the distance is <1.5 (in arbitrary units), the player is asked whether to attack the specimen (Y/N). If the player agrees, the damage inflicted on the specimen is calculated (depending on the type of unit and the number of soldiers), intended as a reduction in the growth stage. If this value reaches zero, the specimen is destroyed and disappears from the map.

Each day, the range of the plant's miasma is calculated (depending on the weather conditions). If the distance to the unit is less than the miasma range, the plant defends itself. The damage inflicted by the plant on the unit is then calculated (depending on the growth stage of the plant) in terms of soldiers killed and intoxicated (the latter could be reintegrated if the hospital is operational).

Structure Operability The city's militia report follows, detailing the structures, their level of operability (from 1 to 5), and if they have been infected. The miasma reduces the operability of the structures. If some structures have been damaged by the plants, it is requested which ones to disinfect. Restoring one status point requires ten reservists. For example, if a structure has an operability of 3, it would take 20 reservists to reach an operability of 5. Note: On the fifth day, it will be necessary to restore the railway station to allow further reinforcements (50 soldiers per unit, in addition to the reserve pool).

The Fortresses In the fortress phase, each fortress observes if there are any specimens within its visual range. If so, the specimen is immediately bombarded. The damage inflicted on the plant depends on the operability of the fortress.

The Hospital This screen shows the operability of the hospital and the number of intoxicated soldiers reintegrated into service in the various units. Finally, (except in some special conditions) the enemy's turn begins (see below).

Game Elements

Weather Each day the weather conditions are specified:

- Rainy
- Stormy
- Windy

Rainy and stormy weather differently reduce both the DS (the extent of each unit's movement) and the range of the plant's miasma. In case of Windy, there can be 8 types of wind (e.g., north wind, northeast wind, etc.). The type of wind impacts the spread of the plant's seeds, determining the direction and distance a new specimen will spawn from its "parent."

Units

- Mounted Explorers (2 squadrons)
- Artillery (1 battalion)
- Mounted Hussars (1 battalion)
- Infantry (2 battalions)

Explorers and artillery have the highest visual range (3, in arbitrary units). They are followed by hussars (2) and infantry (1.6). While other units can only attack if the distance from the specimen is < 1.6 , artillery can attack even at a distance of 3 (thus not receiving the plant's miasma). If a unit's soldier count reaches zero, the unit is removed from the map (it could, however, be reintegrated in a special turn, see below).

Reservists At the beginning of the game, 500 reservists are available. They can be used both to reinforce individual units and to disinfect structures affected by the miasma. The number of soldiers that can be assigned from the reserve pool to the units depends on the operability of the fortresses.

The Map

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0										
1								E		
2				D		G				
3					H					
4					M	I		F		A
5		B							O	
6					L					
7							N			
8									C	
9										

Structures

- Farms
 - Collins Farm (A)
 - Banks Farm (B)
 - Gabriel Farm (C)
- Railway Station (D)
- Old Mine (E)
- Hospital (F)
- St. George Church (G)
- Residential Districts (Res. District 1 and 2) (H) (I)
- Fortresses
 - Military Central Command
 - St. Patrick Fort
 - St. John Fort
 - Holy Mary Fort
 -

The Plants' Turn Each turn, a specimen:

- Increases its growth stage by 1 unit (making it increasingly difficult to destroy).

- Spreads miasma in a range depending on the weather conditions (minimum range in case of stormy weather, maximum range in case of windy weather). The miasma can affect both units and structures if within the miasma range.
- Reproduces, creating a new specimen. The plants tend to "launch seeds" towards the center of the map, but the birth location of a new specimen also depends on the wind type (if there is north wind, seeds will be pushed south, if there is east wind, seeds will be pushed west, and so on).

Special Turns On the fifth turn, if the railway station has an operability greater than zero, it will be possible to bring in additional reinforcements (50 soldiers per unit). Also, on the first windy day after the seventh turn, a fleet of balloons will conduct a bombardment with two effects:

- Reduction of the growth stage of each specimen by 3 units (with possible destruction of those with a stage less than or equal to 3).
- Identification of specimens not spotted by ground units (not yet present on the map).

Tips

- At the beginning of the game, an explorer squadron is located near the center of the map. By pushing it north, you can spot one of the first hogweed specimens. It's best to use the explorer squadrons initially only for reconnaissance and have them attack only after receiving adequate reinforcements.
- Keep the artillery out of contact with the plants, as it can attack from a distance without receiving the plants' miasma.
- Infantry has a low visual range and is far from spotted specimens at the beginning of the game. Do not underestimate it: it can be decisive in the final stages, against the more grown specimens.
- The railway station will be hit almost immediately. It is not necessary to disinfect it every day, the important thing is that it is operational on the fifth turn

Victory Conditions The player wins if they manage to destroy all the specimens. The plants win if they destroy all the player's combat units or if the overall operability of the structures falls below 22/65.