

# Skud Pai Sho

History and Rules of Play

By @SkudPaiSho

Dedicated to all the anonymous and unknown people who  
made Skud Pai Sho possible.



**The Garden Gate:** [SkudPaiSho.com](https://SkudPaiSho.com)

**The Garden Gate Discord:** [discord.gg/thegardengate](https://discord.gg/thegardengate)

**Download this rulebook:** [SkudPaiSho.com/tgcset](https://SkudPaiSho.com/tgcset)

**Rulebook version date:** March 2022

Special thanks to the following users for their contributions to the game of Skud Pai Sho, The Garden Gate Community, and this rulebook: SpinxKreuz, abacadaren, Cannoli, Monk\_Gyatso, vescucci, Dallin, sirstotes, tree, and of course, MrsSkud.

# Contents

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Origins of Skud Pai Sho .....      | 4  |
| Skud Pai Sho Rules .....           | 5  |
| Overview .....                     | 5  |
| Game Setup .....                   | 5  |
| Game Components .....              | 5  |
| Objective: Harmony Ring .....      | 7  |
| Harmony and Clashing .....         | 7  |
| Beginning the Game .....           | 8  |
| Playing a Turn .....               | 8  |
| Basic Flower Tile Properties ..... | 9  |
| Accent Tile Properties .....       | 10 |
| Special Flower Tiles .....         | 12 |
| Movement Examples .....            | 13 |
| Ending the Game .....              | 15 |
| Skud Pai Sho Rules Reference ..... | 16 |



# Origins of Skud Pai Sho

I am fascinated by what I call “formerly fictional games.” That is, the games seen in fictional worlds that are counterparts to our classic games like chess and Go, but have been brought to life outside of their fictional settings for us to enjoy. In the world of formerly fictional games, Pai Sho is a treasure. Skud Pai Sho is one game from a growing number of unique Pai Sho games. Similar to chess and checkers, these games are played on a common board but have unique rules, pieces, themes, and objectives. Fans of any of these Pai Sho games owe it all to the brilliant series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*.

After seeing Pai Sho first shown on screen in Book 1 of the series, its appearance in Book 2 lures viewers in further as the beloved Uncle Iroh assures his nephew that “Pai Sho is more than just a game.” Inspired by the portrayal of Pai Sho, some fans took up the task of bringing the fictional game of Pai Sho into the real world.

With only the game board and a few Pai Sho tile designs shown in the canon material and no rules ever stated, multiple real life Pai Sho games evolved in the years following the airing of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. When I came across the most widespread set of rules that centered around a theme of flower arranging, I was drawn in right away. The mechanics of the game were unique, intriguing, and rang true to the world of Avatar. In practice, I felt that the rules needed a lot of simplifying in order to be an approachable, playable, and fun game. I quickly set to work, building upon the amazing efforts of the fans who had gone before me. After months of brainstorming, building SkudPaiSho.com to playtest with others online, and tweaking, Skud Pai Sho was born.

Ever since, SkudPaiSho.com (also called The Garden Gate) and the community around it has continued to grow. Other Pai Sho games, like Vagabond Pai Sho, have been made playable on The Garden Gate as well. You can join The Garden Gate Discord Community from SkudPaiSho.com and discover the stories behind those other games. But now prepare a pot of tea, turn the pages, and enjoy a game of Skud Pai Sho. ☯

# Skud Pai Sho Rules

The following sections cover the rules in great detail. For a quick guide, see the back page of this rulebook.

## Overview

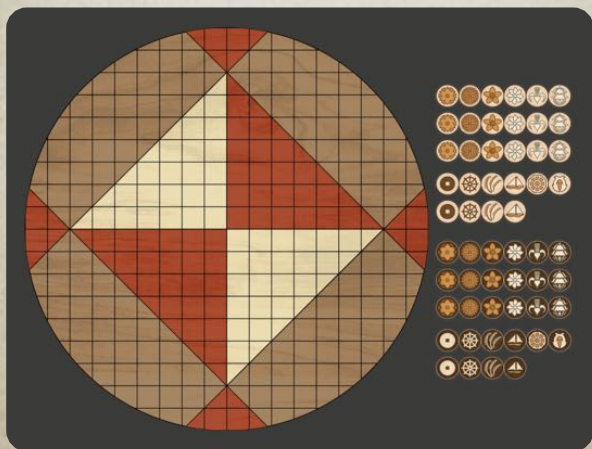
In Skud Pai Sho, 2 players each attempt to arrange flowers into position while changing the landscape of the board to outpace their opponent.

## Game Setup

One player, called the Host, plays with light tiles. The other player, called the Guest, plays with dark tiles. Players sit at the board and place all of their tiles nearby, face up. Your set of unplayed tiles off of the board is your Tile Reserve.

Traditionally, the Host is the player who is offering the game, and players sit facing the board so that a Red Garden is in the lower left side of the Central Gardens as pictured below.

## Game Components



Pai Sho Board

2-Player set of  
Skud Pai Sho Tiles



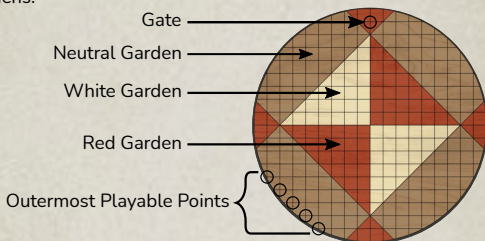
## The Board

Tiles are played on the intersections of the board, which are called points. All visible intersections are playable points.

The board is made up of different sections:

- **Gates:** The points fully inside the four red triangle areas around the edges. There are four Gate points.
- **Neutral Gardens:** The large brown areas around the edges
- **Red Gardens:** The large red areas in the center
- **White Gardens:** The large white areas in the center

Note: The Red and White Gardens are collectively referred to as the Central Gardens.



## The Tiles

Each player has a set of tiles. The Host has light tiles and the Guest has dark tiles. The Guest's set of tiles are shown here.

### Basic Flower Tiles (3 of each)



### Special Flower Tiles (1 of each)



### Accent Tiles (2 of each)



Note: The Basic Flower Tiles are referred to by their shorthand names (e.g. R3) throughout the rules, which indicate their color and movement distance. The phrase "Flower Tile" refers to any Basic Flower Tile or Special Flower Tile.

## Objective: Harmony Ring

The first player to form a Harmony Ring wins. A Harmony Ring is a connected chain of Harmonies that surrounds the center point of the board without touching it.

## Harmony and Clashing

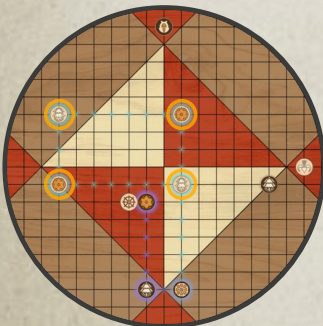
*Note: Flower Tiles in a Gate are said to be Growing. Flower Tiles anywhere else on the board are said to be Blooming.*

A Harmony is created when two harmonious Blooming Flower Tiles belonging to the same player are on the same line with no other tiles or Gates between them.

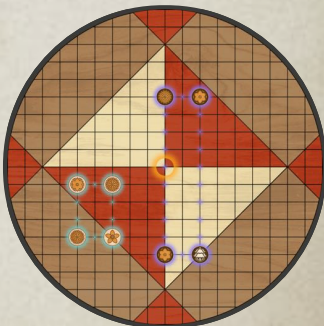
A Clash is when two clashing Blooming Flower Tiles belonging to either player would be lined up, but no tiles on the board are ever allowed to Clash. So, you cannot make a move if it would result in any tiles Clashing.

*For which tiles form Harmony and which tiles Clash, see the Basic Flower Tile Properties section of the rulebook.*

## Harmony Ring Example



✓ Host wins with a Harmony Ring. Harmony Rings of 4 tiles are the simplest, but there is no limit to how many tiles can form a Harmony Ring.



✗ No Harmony Rings on the board. Players have connected chains of Harmonies, but they do not surround the center point without touching it.

*Beginner Tip: When playing, players may agree to use small tokens to mark the points between Harmonies to visualize them on the board.*

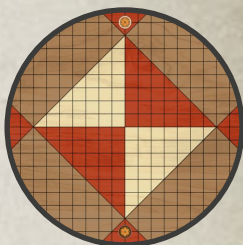
# Beginning the Game

Players each choose 4 of their Accent Tiles to use during the game. Set aside the other 4; they will not be used during the game. Traditionally the Host chooses their Accent Tiles first, and then the Guest chooses theirs.

*Beginner Tip: Choose one of each Accent Tile when learning the game.*

The Guest then chooses a Basic Flower Tile. Each player begins with a tile of this type in opposite Gates. Then, players alternate taking turns, beginning with the Guest.

*Players may instead agree to an Informal Start, where the first tile played is simply a normal turn, with no restrictions on which Gate is used.*



Example of Guest choosing to begin with R3

## Playing a Turn

On a turn, you choose to either Plant or Arrange.

### Planting

If there is an open Gate point, you may Plant on your turn. When Planting, place a Basic Flower Tile from your Tile Reserve into an open Gate.

### Arranging

When Arranging, move one of your Flower Tiles on the board along a clear path of 1 or more points, up to its maximum movement distance. Tiles move up, down, left, and right along the grid lines of the board, not diagonally. Tiles cannot move over other tiles. Tiles may change direction during movement.

*Note: If you have tiles in all the Gates, it is expected that you will move out of a Gate on your turn. But this is not the case for competitive and tournament play.*

## Harmony Bonus

If you form any new Harmonies between your tiles when Arranging, you may do one of the following optional Harmony Bonus actions:

- Place an Accent Tile from your Tile Reserve
- Plant a Special Flower from your Tile Reserve into an open Gate
- If you have no Growing Flower Tiles, Plant a Basic Flower Tile from your Tile Reserve in an open Gate

A new Harmony is a Harmony between two tiles that were not in Harmony at the beginning of the turn.

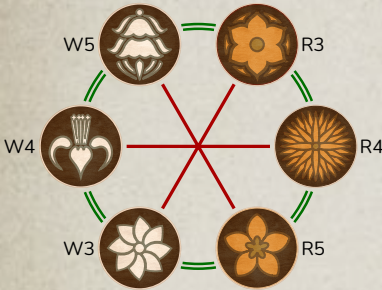


# Basic Flower Tiles Properties

Basic Flower Tiles are Planted and Arranged to form Harmonies as players work towards the end goal of forming a Harmony Ring.

Basic Flower Tiles:

- Have maximum move distance of the number in their name
- Cannot end movement completely inside an opposite-colored Garden
- Form Harmony with adjacent tiles in the Circle of Harmony pictured below
- Clash with opposite-colored same-numbered tiles
- Can capture Clashing tiles by landing on them. Captured tiles are removed from the game.



— Harmonizes  
— Clashes

The Circle of Harmony is the order of the Basic Flower Tiles: Red 3, 4, 5, White 3, 4, 5

*Note: Tiles are neutral with themselves and tiles two steps away in the circle. They can be lined up on the board but no Harmony is formed between them.*

## Example Basic Flower Tile Movement

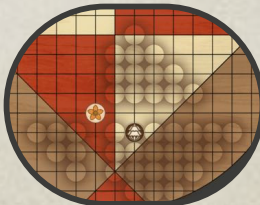
In these examples, the tile can move to any of the marked spaces, with some example movement paths marked by arrows:



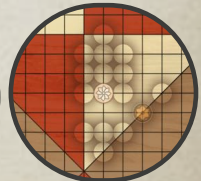
R3 (movement of 3)



R4 (movement of 4)  
*Note: May move through Gate but not onto it.*



W5 (movement of 5)  
*Note: Cannot move into opposite-colored Garden but can move through any unoccupied space. Cannot move to be lined up with a Clashing tile.*



W3 (movement of 3)  
*Note: Can capture opponent's R3 by landing on it. Protected from being captured by the R3, because the R3 cannot move into the White Garden.*

# Accent Tile Properties

Accent Tiles are played only during a Harmony Bonus. They change the landscape of the board through a lasting effect or a one-time action. Accent Tiles may not be moved when Arranging on a turn. At the beginning of the game, each player chooses 4 Accent Tiles to use during the game.

Note: Accent Tiles cannot be placed in a Gate, be played in a way that causes tiles to Clash, or be used to move a tile into an opposite-colored Garden, into a Gate, out of a Gate, or off of the board.



**Rock** Played on an open point. Cancels Harmonies belonging to either player formed along the vertical and horizontal grid lines it lies on. Cannot be moved by a Wheel.



**Knotweed** Played on an open point. Cancels Harmonies belonging to either player formed by tiles on any of the 8 surrounding points.



**Wheel** Played on an open point not surrounding a Rock where it will not illegally move a tile. When played, rotate tiles on all 8 surrounding points one point clockwise around the Wheel.



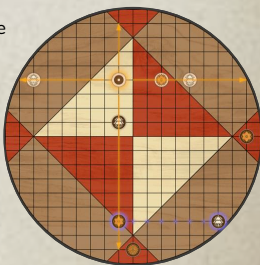
**Boat** Played on any Accent Tile or Blooming Flower Tile. **When played on a Blooming Flower Tile:** Replace the Flower Tile with the Boat and move the Flower Tile to one of the 8 surrounding points.

**When played on an Accent Tile:** remove both the Accent Tile and the Boat from the game, leaving the point open.

## Example Accent Tile Effects

**Rock:** Harmonies along the highlighted lines are canceled, so each player has a Harmony canceled by the Rock in this example. The Rock is also disrupting a Harmony by being between two of the Host's tiles, as any other tile would.

*Note: If Guest moves the R4 in the south Gate to be above or below the southern R3, there would be no Harmony formed, so no Harmony Bonus would be granted. The R4 can still form Harmony with the R3 to the left or right, since there is no Rock on that horizontal grid line.*



**Knotweed:** Tiles of either player on any of the 8 surrounding points do not form Harmony. Three tiles are affected in this example.

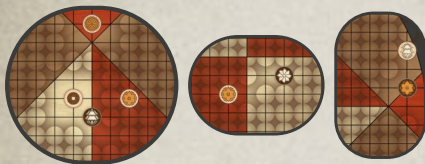
*Note: Remember that the Rock cancels Harmonies formed along certain lines (the grid lines it is on) and the Knotweed cancels Harmonies formed by certain tiles (the surrounding tiles).*



## Example Accent Tile Effects

**Wheel:** See example Wheel movements to the right.

In the below examples, possible Wheel placement points are marked. The points where it cannot be played would either attempt to move a Rock, move a Basic Flower Tile into an opposite-colored Garden, move a tile out of or onto a Gate, move a tile off of the board, or cause tiles to Clash.



Example Wheel Movement



Before

After



Before

After

**Boat played on a Blooming Flower Tile:**

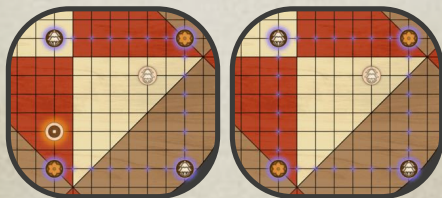


Before

After

The Flower Tile is moved to any legal surrounding point (not into opposite-colored Garden, into a Clash, into a Gate, or off the board). In this example, the Guest moves their R3 into Harmony and off the grid line blocked by the Rock.

**Boat played on an Accent Tile:**



Before

After

The Accent Tile and the Boat are removed from the game, as captured tiles would be, leaving the point empty. In this example, playing the Boat onto the Rock as shown completes the Guest's Harmony Ring to win the game.

# Special Flower Tiles

Special Flower Tiles are played only during a Harmony Bonus, when they may be Planted in an open Gate.



## White Lotus

Moves up to 2 spaces. Forms Harmony with all Basic Flower Tiles of either player. When the White Lotus is in Harmony, the Harmony belongs to the player who owns the Basic Flower Tile, not the player who owns the White Lotus. So, when a White Lotus is in line with your opponent's Basic Flower, the Harmony is theirs, not yours.



Here, the Guest just moved their W4 into Harmony with the Host's White Lotus, so the Guest gets a Harmony Bonus. The Host's White Lotus could also be used in the Guest's winning Harmony Ring on a later turn.



Both players' White Lotus tiles are lined up. They are not in Harmony with each other, since White Lotus tiles only form Harmony with Basic Flower Tiles.



## Orchid

Moves up to 6 spaces. Opponent's Flower Tiles on any of the 8 points surrounding the Orchid are trapped. Trapped Flower Tiles may not be moved when Arranging on a turn, but may be moved by an Accent Tile that moves tiles.

**While you have a Blooming White Lotus on the board**, your Orchid is also considered wild. A wild Orchid is:

- Vulnerable: can be captured by any of the opponent's Flower Tiles
- Raging: can capture any of the opponent's Flower Tiles

*Note: Without a Blooming White Lotus, a player's Orchid can only be captured by an opponent's wild Orchid.*



Both players' Orchids are trapped by their opponent's Orchid. The Host's Orchid is also trapping the Guest's R4. If the Host's White Lotus moves out of the Gate to be Blooming, the Host's wild Orchid could be captured by the Guest's R5, and the Guest's Orchid would no longer be trapped.



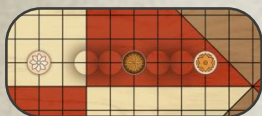
Some possible moves for Guest's Orchid are shown. Guest has a Blooming White Lotus, so their Orchid is wild and able to capture any of Host's Flower Tiles it can reach. The Host could capture Guest's Orchid with their W3 or R5 if Guest does not move the Orchid.



# Movement Examples

## Clash Traps

When moving a tile, certain moves may not be allowed because it would cause tiles on the board to Clash. This can occur when a tile could reach a point in line with a Clashing tile, but also when a tile is between Clashing tiles. In this case, the tile may not move away and leave other tiles in a Clash.



Guest's R4 cannot leave the W3 and R3 Clashing.

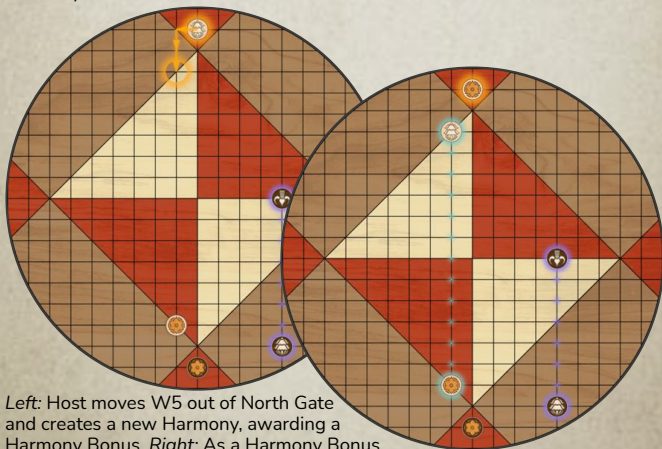


Guest's R4 cannot move, it is Clash trapped both ways.

*Note: Clashing is an advanced rule and can be easy to miss on the board. If a Clash is noticed during a game, use the next turn to resolve it and continue play as normal. Or, players may agree to play without the Clashing rule.*

## Example Turns

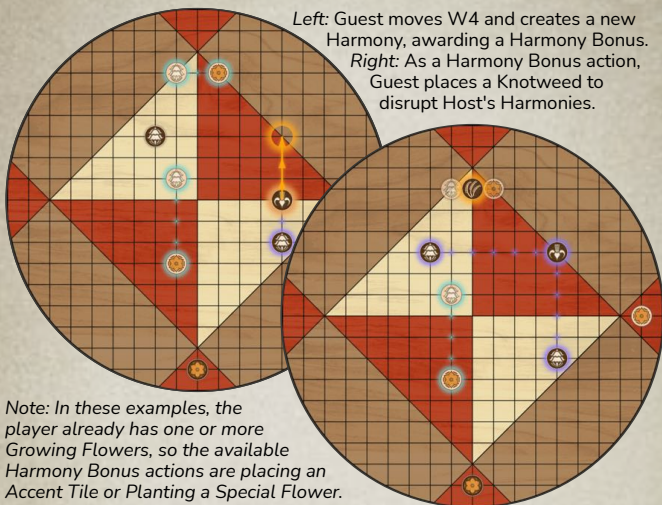
On a turn, a player either Plants by placing a Basic Flower Tiles from their Tile Reserve into an open Gate or Arranges by moving a Flower Tile already on the board and taking an optional Harmony Bonus action if one is awarded. Below are examples of the board before and after a player Arranges and performs a Harmony Bonus action.



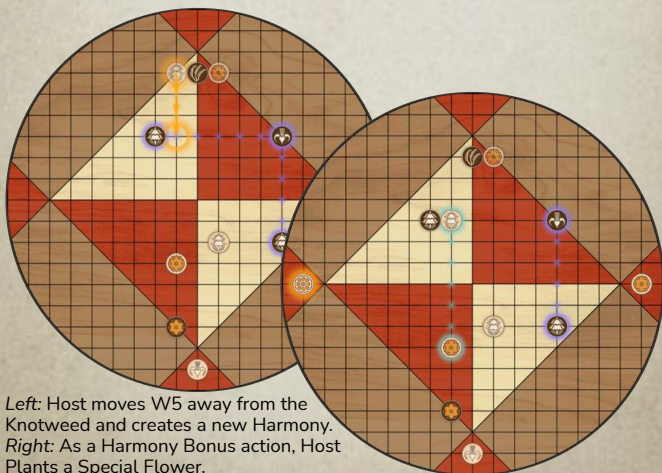
*Left:* Host moves W5 out of North Gate and creates a new Harmony, awarding a Harmony Bonus. *Right:* As a Harmony Bonus action, Host Plants R3 in an open Gate.

## Additional Example Turns

In these examples, the board is shown before and after a player Arranges and performs a Harmony Bonus action.



*Note:* In these examples, the player already has one or more Growing Flowers, so the available Harmony Bonus actions are placing an Accent Tile or Planting a Special Flower.

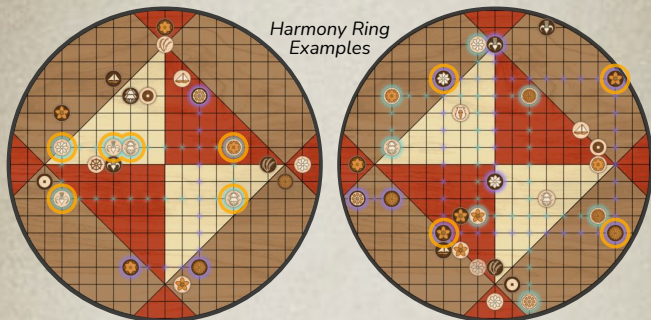


# Ending the Game

The game ends when a Harmony Ring is formed, a player plays his or her last Basic Flower Tile, or a player forfeits.

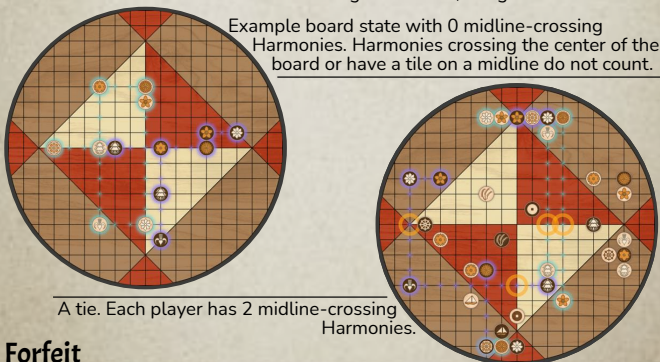
## Harmony Ring

A Harmony Ring is a connected chain of Harmonies that surrounds the center point of the board without touching it. A player who forms a Harmony Ring wins. Both players could have Harmony Rings, resulting in a tie.



## Playing Last Basic Flower Tile

When a player plays their last Basic Flower Tile onto the board, the game ends. The winner is the player with more midline-crossing Harmonies, where the midlines are the four lines separating the quadrants of the board. If both players have the same number of midline-crossing Harmonies, the game is a tie.



## Forfeit

The game can also end when a player forfeits. You cannot win if you forfeit unless you give your opponent a gift that they deem worthy enough for you to deserve the win. Pai Sho players often enjoy gifts of teaware and fine tea. ☺



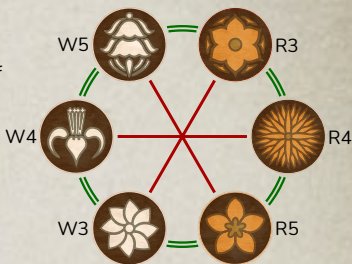
# Skud Pai Sho Rules Reference

## Objective: Harmony Ring

The objective of Skud Pai Sho is to create a Harmony Ring, a connected chain of Harmonies that surrounds the center point of the board without touching it.

## Basic Flower Tiles

- Played into a Gate on a turn when Planting or as a Harmony Bonus, if no Growing Flowers
- Name is color and move distance
- Cannot end movement inside opposite-colored Garden
- Form Harmony with adjacent tiles
- Clash with opposite tiles
- Can capture Clashing tiles



## Accent Tiles

- Played as a Harmony Bonus
- Cannot be played in a Gate or to cause a Clash, move a tile into or off a Gate, into an opposite-colored Garden, or off the board.



**Rock:** Cancels Harmonies along the grid lines it lies on. Cannot be moved by a Wheel.



**Knotweed:** Cancels Harmonies formed by surrounding tiles.



**Wheel:** Rotates surrounding tiles one point clockwise around itself.



**Boat:** Played on a Blooming Flower to move the Flower to a surrounding point or clears the point of an Accent Tile.

## Special Flower Tiles

- Played into a Gate as a Harmony Bonus



**White Lotus:** Moves up to 2 spaces. Forms Harmony with all Basic Flower Tiles of either player. Harmonies with an opponent's piece belong to the opponent.



**Orchid:** Moves up to 6 spaces. Traps opponent's surrounding Flower Tiles. While you have a Blooming White Lotus on the board, your Orchid is also considered wild. A wild Orchid is:

- Vulnerable: can be captured by any of the opponent's Flower Tiles
- Raging: can capture any of the opponent's Flower Tiles

Play online at The Garden Gate: [SkudPaiSho.com](http://SkudPaiSho.com)

Join The Garden Gate Discord Community: [discord.gg/thegardengate](https://discord.gg/thegardengate)