

Pepo, the Jack-o-Lantern Planet

Name: Pepo (pronunciation: PEE - po)

Size: A-class

Shape: Sphere

Type: Earth Body

Suggested Crystal Sphere / Wildspace System: Theiaspace

Total Population: 4,000

Distribution:

- Human - 50%
- Halfling - 25%
- Hadozee - 15%
- Half-Orc - 5%
- Half-Elf - 3%
- Other - 2%

Population Centers:

- Peduncle Palace City (pop. 1,000)
- Proudeye (pop. 500)
- Town on the Grin (pop. 1,500)
- Blossom Town (pop. 500)

Primary Outputs:

- Coffee
- Spices
- Precious gems
- Fabrics

Welcome to Pepo

Pepo is a planetoid megaflora in the shape of a massive jack-o'-lantern, 5 miles in diameter. A massive flame at Pepo's core grows and fades to mark the passage of the day, and the entire planet enjoys eternal tropical weather. But danger lurks below Pepo's surface. The planet is in a natural state of decline, hastened by extractive harvesting. As Pepo's nights grow ever longer and colder, strange and hostile creatures have begun to surface from its depths.

Planetary Anatomy

Too far from its star to be habitable for most mortal races, Pepo's light and heat are instead provided by a massive flame that burns deep inside it. Light exits through the holes of Pepo's unmoving "face", and is distributed in the atmospheric envelope, so the entire surface enjoys the same single day-night cycle. The planet is an eternal tropic with 2 simple seasons driven by the changing heat of the flame in its heart. Pepo is one of the smallest habitable entities capable of sustaining life, smaller than even most moons. It's only a 15-mile

walk between the Peduncle at the north pole and the Blossom in the south, so even slow travelers can cross the planet in half a day.

Residents of Pepo refer to its geology in terms using the anatomy of the jack-o-lanterns they carve for festivities.

Rind. The outermost layer of the planet consists of clay soils from highly weathered minerals below. The bright hue of these clays give Pepo its distinctive orange appearance when seen from afar. This soil is ideal for agriculture, which occurs mostly along the banks of the “ribs” of the planet where water flows.

Pulp. The earth below the rind is closer, and thus more affected by, the magical flame in Pepo’s heart. Feldspar minerals form here in layers, creating deep veins of brilliant moonstone and sunstone. In addition, a sweet fruitmeat grows within the rocks, occasionally bubbling up to create fields of “warts” on the surface.

Carp. Below the pulp are illogical rocky outcroppings spanned by enormous growths of massive reflective, fibrous strands. The rock and strands occlude the flame below, but allow its light to shine upwards. Most pepans have only seen the carp by down at the great crevasses of Pepo’s jack-o-lantern face.

Cavity. Below the carp lies the Great Flame, the heart of Pepo which gives it light and heat. If the pepan metaphor holds true, the Flame itself may be a massive candle. But no one knows what the cavity looks like. While occasional curious or reckless individuals have ventured into the carp,

none have seen what lies beneath and returned to tell the tale.

Vine. Above the rest of the planet, a massive vine stretches some 2 miles into wildspace. It is firmly attached to the planet at the Peduncle near the north pole. This vine is a part of the planet’s atmospheric envelope, but has weaker gravity. At its tip, an ever-blooming flower grows. Its petals are constantly cut and made into paper and fabric at the behest of the Pump-King.

The People of Pepo

Denizens of Pepo, the pepans, are generally a relaxed, slow-moving folk similar to the simple farmers that dot the map of Toril.

Most pepans live an agrarian and pastoral lifestyle. The planet’s rich soil and tropical climate make it the ideal location to grow crops such as corn, gourds, and common beans, as well as a variety of spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and mace. Farmers also raise animals that can survive the heat and humidity, such as cattle, goats, and turkeys. Pepans have a history of agriculture that goes back for centuries. They understand farming deeply, but have little experience with war, so they struggle to respond to incursions from the monsters below the surface.

At some point in the distant past, Pepo was populated by distinct lineages of elves and orcs, but as long centuries passed, most pepans are at least partly human. As a consequence, no denizen of the planet is more than 180 years of age.

Threats to Pepo

Pepo was once an idyllic planet, free from danger. But with the long centuries, a spiritual rot has begun to grow from inside Pepo's heart, and it threatens to take the entire planet with it.

Darkness. Beneath Pepo's idyllic countryside lies the Great Flame, a massive fire that burns at the planet's heart. The Flame provides warmth in the cold of wildspace, and its light leaks out of the planet's jack-o-lantern features before magically suffusing its atmospheric bubble. "Night" on Pepo is actually a period of prolonged dusk, as the flame dims without going out. As a result, no Pepan has ever seen a truly dark sky.

But the Great Flame is weakening. The nights grow longer and colder with time. Each year's harvest is worse than the last, threatening eventual starvation or a mass emigration. Some believe that it's only a matter of time before the Great Flame goes out for good, plunging Pepo into a frigid, eternal night.

Collapse. Pepo's structure is weaker than it was centuries ago, and that weakness has been exacerbated by the recent **Starstone Mine**. Parts of the planet have begun to crumble inwards.

Two decades ago, a massive earthquake caused land near the north pole to sink, forming **Deep Rib Lake**. The ensuing wave of earth took two towns and nearly a thousand lives with it, obliterating the planet's jack-o-lantern eye and nose. Now both Proudeye and Town-on-the-Grin reinforce their cavern walls with iron struts in the hopes of mitigating the damage of a future disaster.

Monsters. A hundred years ago, the first dark creatures climbed from below the Rind the surface and began to ravage the land. As time has passed, these creatures have grown in number, tearing up the soil and the things that grow within it.

The monsters take various forms. Some are **earth elementals** formed from hard feldspars, with glittering flames for eyes. Others form from the carp strands below into **shambling mounds**, a mixture of squelching fiber and orange clay. Still others are living **shadows**, silently withering plants and draining the lives of livestock.

Pepans have been forced to militarize in an attempt to defend their home, but centuries of peace have left them inexperienced, and the monsters below are vicious. Near a hundred lives have been lost in the last century, alongside countless livestock.

Pepan Gazetteer

Pepo is exceedingly small – a mere 100 square miles – so movement across the planet is easy. Even at a leisurely pace, it's possible to circumnavigate the pumpkin-globe in just 8 hours of travel. But despite its small size and consistent biome, Pepo boasts a sizeable number of points of interest.

Blossom

Blossom is the name of both a lake at Pepo's southern pole, as well as the town built around it. Water is magically drawn along Pepo's rib rivers to the lake where it collects. Blossom Lake is pristine, but it's slightly smaller than it once was, because some water now flows towards **Deep Rib Lake**.

Residents of Blossom Town favor fishing over agriculture. The mayor of Blossom Town is a half-orc **commoner** named Enti Broadwire, a fisherman of great renown. He organizes the town's annual fishing contest and is trying to find evidence of the fabled loch blossom serpent that supposedly roams the lake bed at night.

Deep Rib Lake

Deep Rib Lake is one of the newest structures on Pepo surface. About twenty years ago, a large section of Pepo caved inwards, creating the depression in the lake and sending a massive ripple of earth towards what is now **The Crush**. Water that would have flowed south now collects here, creating a brackish basin filled with toxic algae.

Deep Rib Lake is populated by scant few. Some pepans displaced by the effects of the catastrophe were forced to find new work, harvesting and dryign the toxic algal blooms for burning.

The Crush

The catastrophe that created Deep Rib Lake also sent ripple effects westwards, creating one of the greatest tragedies in Pepo's history. The Crush was once home to two towns, Humbleye and Smallsnout, which were built into Pepo's right eye and nose carvings, much like **Proudeye** and **Town-on-the-Grin**. When Pepo's surface collapse, the ensuing earthquake stole hundreds of lives and turned both towns into dusty ruins.

No pepan dare live in the ruins of the Crush, but there are rumors that creatures from the deep just below the surface, and that the ghosts of lost pepans are trapped in its ruined streets.

The Great Vine

Connecte to Pepo through the **Peduncle Palace**, the Great Vine is a massive pumpkin vine, two miles long and half a mile around. It maintains both a weak atmospheric bubble and weak gravity.

No one lives along the vine, but from time to time, tradition dictates that a pepan should make the pilgrimage along the vine to the **Harvest-Flower** at its tip.

Harvest-Flower

At the very end of the **Great Vine** is the Harvest-Flower, an enormous bud with a regenerating flower at its tip. The flower is constantly regenerating, but has never bloomed.

At any given time, ten to twenty pepans live up here, harvesting what they can before returning back down the vine to the planet proper.

Peduncle Palace

Carved into the massive peduncle that connects Pepo to the **Great Vine**, Peduncle Palace is the de facto loading location for incomign spelljammers, as well as the abode of King Cedro the Pump-King, a human **noble**.

The king himself, a dozen or so attendants, and twice as many **guards**, make this palace their home.

The palace consists of a wide entrance hall, by far the largest room in the palace, as well as guestrooms, bedchambers, basic lavatories, a dining hall, several balconies, a cellar stocked with food and pumpkin wine, and a treasury.

A city has sprung up around Peduncle Palace, built around harvesting the outside of the peduncle, growing crops, and entertaining the occasional spacefarer who comes to Pepo to relax. The Pump-King has creatively named this the Peduncle Palace City.

Proudeye

The town of Proudeye is one of two towns on Pepo built into the city's enormous

natural jack-o-lantern features. Houses have been carved by hand into the rock of the planet, and hundreds of windows look out over the strands and glittering stone of the carp below.

Both Proudeye and its sister **Town-on-the-Grin** are reinforced with large iron struts in the hopes of avoiding the calamity that created the **Crush**.

Proudeye is also home to the scholar Izar Thornbow, a hadozee **priest** studying Pepo's unique geobiology.

The Pulpdust

Thanks to **Deep Rib Lake**'s depression in the earth, the waterways that would normally lead south beyond it have dried up. The result is a dry desert known as the Pulpdust, which extends several miles between Deep Rib Lake and **Blossom**. With each passing dry season, the Pulpdust encroaches further and further longitudinally, slowly sucking the water out of other farmsteads.

The cracked earth of the Pulpdust is scattered with the remains of abandoned farms and houses. The only living things are a few donkeys and zebu cows that escaped their old owners.

Starstone Mine

Just south of **Peduncle Palace** is Starstone Mine, an open-pit mine that extends a mile across and half a mile at its deepest point. Starstone Mine is the only mine in all of Pepo, and miners here regularly extract hundreds of pounds of rock, from which large moonstones and sunstones can be extracted.

The owner of the mine is a rare outsider, an entrepreneuring giff **veteran** named Tiber Startrotter whose first and only duty is to his own coffers. He plans on stripping the mine bare and selling the gemstones to fund a lavish retirement elsewhere. Tiber views the pepans as simple-minded and easy to manipulate.

Unfortunately, this massive hole in the earth has drawn the attention of the monsters, which rise from below each night. Tiber is training a handful of pepans as **bandits** in the hopes of getting a task force that can continue to operate the mine at nighttime, but pepans don't make good soldiers, so his successes have been limited.

Town-on-the-Grin

Town-on-the-Grin is the largest town on Pepo, spanning the planet's enormous jack-o-lantern mouth.

Similar to its sister town **Proudeye**, Town-on-the-Grin overlooks the glittering carp that lies below Pepo, and is reinforced by iron struts.

Unlike its sister, Town-on-the-Grin has taken advantage of the carp strands to form a sort of travel network. Dozens of aerial tramways formed from thick woven carp ropes span the chasm of the grin. An industry of couriers called Strandwalkers has sprung up around this network, allowing quick transportation of both messages, cargo, and even other pepans if they want to save some time.

Town-on-the-Grin is also home to creatives, inventors, and chefs. It's best known for an odd combination of highly-concentrated coffee mixed with steamed zebu cow's milk, wart sugar, and mixture of local spices,

known as Pepan Spice Kaethae by its inventor Lisma Buen.

The Wart Fields

Below Pepo's surface, the magic of pepo's Great Flame causes a sweet fruitmeat grows in and around the various clays. In large concentrations, this fruitmeat will push upwards towards the surface, creating "warts" of buttery, pumpkin-flavored sugar that can be harvested. Wherever you stand in Pepo, odds are high you'll see at least a wart or two on the horizon, but usually never more than that.

The exception to this rule is the Wart Fields, an expanse of warts near Pepo's southern pole that extends several miles in every direction. Growing crops or tending animals is impossible because of the extreme sugar content in the earth and the constant growth of new warts, but it's a veritable gold mine of delicious sugar. A hundred or so pepans live out here, harvesting, cleaning, and refining the sugar by day, before covering the warts by night to prevent incursion from creatures below.

Traveling Through Pepo

Pepo is exceedingly small, a mere 100 square miles, so movement across the planet is easy. Even if the characters move at a leisurely pace, they can circumnavigate the pumpkin-globe in 8 hours of travel time.

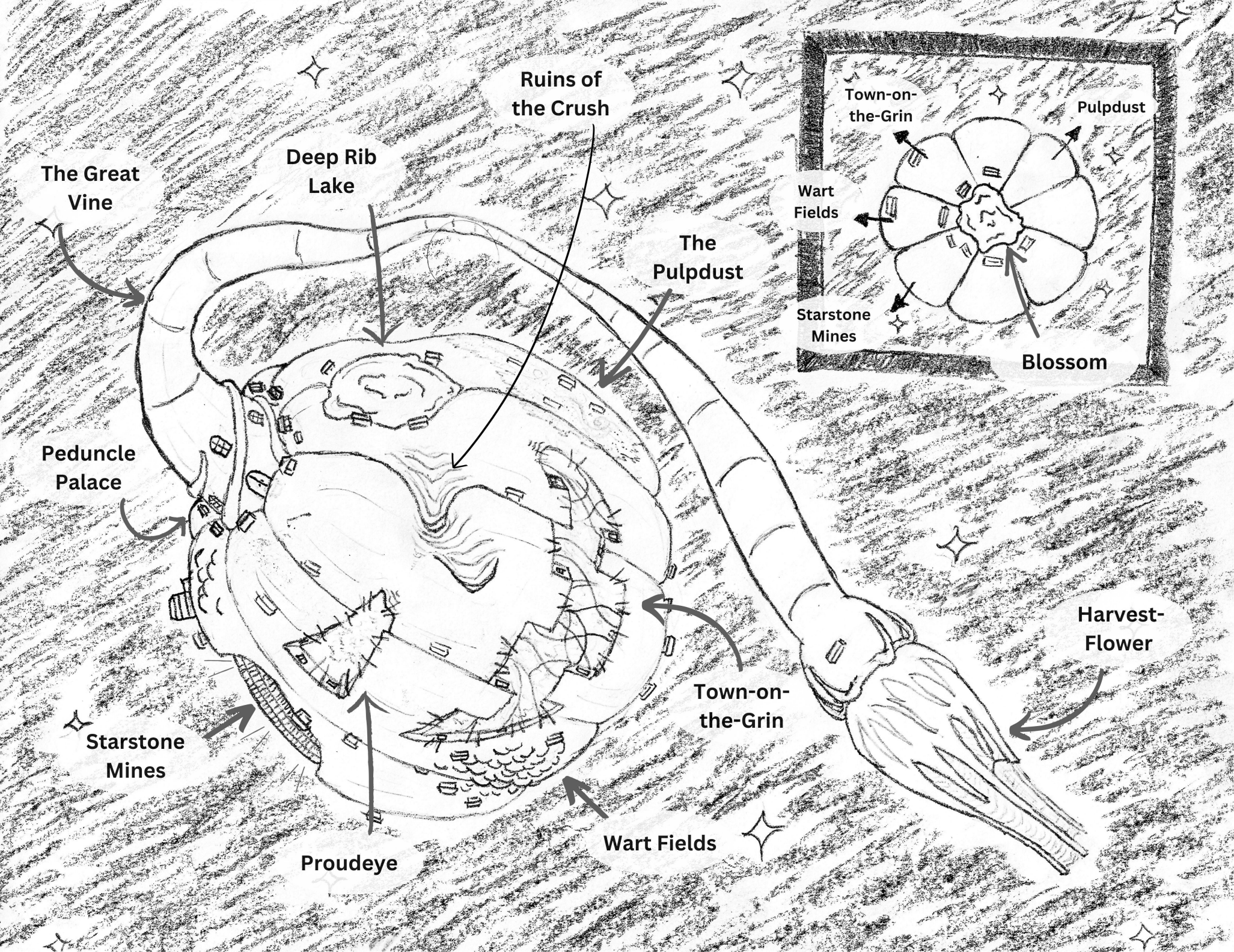
Unless tracking time and exhaustion are of the utmost priority, assume the party can visit any three locations in a day without issue. If the party chooses to be fast, they can visit more, though pepans will certainly make comments about the impatience of off-world folks.

Travel across Pepo inevitably involves crossing paths with its denizens, and many pepans will want to talk to off-worlders out of curiosity or desperation. When the party chooses to visit somewhere on Pepo, roll a

d8 and consult the random encounter table below to determine what happens along the way. You can also choose whichever encounter feels more appropriate, or create your own.

Pepo Random Encounters

d8	Encounter
1	A farmer on foot briefly walks the same path as the party and makes conversation. He mentions there's a fishing contest at Blossom lake, with cash prizes for top finishers.
2	A group of anxious-looking teenagers approaches the adventurers. They ask for help finding a friend of theirs who fell while the group was exploring The Crush .
3	A traveling sugar merchant tries to sell the party a delicious, buttery-tasting refined sugar from the Wart Fields . If the adventurers express interest, she'll gladly escort with them to the fields.
4	A dozen bored zebu cows follow the traveling party from a distance of 10-20 feet away for ten minutes before turning away.
5	A pepan with a heavy cough attempts to hail the party from the side of the road. He asks if they have a way to heal the poison he inhaled from a long shift farming the toxic algae growing in Deep Rib Lake to feed his family. A dose of antitoxin or any method of neutralizing poison gives him reprieve.
6	Four cheerful pepans are carting iron struts to Town-on-the-Grin with a half-dozen donkeys. They mention the town inventors.
7	An uncharacteristically dirty dignitary headed to Peduncle Palace asks the adventurers if they have met with the Pump-King. If pressed on the state of their clothes, they will admit they were followed by some cows, ran away, and fell in the mud.
8	A fabric merchant driving a carriage with two uncooperative donkeys catches up to the party and attempts to sell them costumes, fine clothes, or robes made from the flower petals harvested along the Great Vine . They are willing to sell at a steep discount if you'll put a good word for them with the Pump-King.



Ruins of the Crush

Deep Rib Lake

The Great Vine

The Pulpdust

Peduncle Palace

Starstone Mines

Proudeye

Wart Fields

Town-on-the-Grin

Harvest-Flower

Town-on-the-Grin

Pulpdust

Wart Fields

Starstone Mines

Blossom