-SORTING/MATCHING AND TENDING MECHANICS-

Casual Game Design; Gregory Trefry – Chapter 3 ‘Play is the Thing’

* Most forms of play grow stale after a while; if you give yourself something to strive for and something to measure yourself against you provide the activity with shape
* There is a liminal moment in play when a playful activity transforms into a game
  + The play provides the spark of fun while the game provides the framework for long-term interaction
* Designers push players through these liminal moments by providing the rules and goals which define the game, building a system that supports repeat play
* Many casual games hover close to the playful activity which inspired that game
* Sometimes, casual games barely cross that fine line between play and game, focusing primarily on delivering the promise of play initially held out by the game
* Most people seek straightforward, almost elemental play when looking into casual games – they want a game with simple, stripped down mechanics that is easy to learn and can be played in short bursts
* To add complexity, you must add rules and this ultimately makes the game harder to learn and master – some casual players may demand more depth and complexity if they enjoy the game and progress in it
* From animals, to children, to adults, we all occasionally find hours of enjoyment in playing with some object; spinning, bouncing, counting, sorting, matching and rolling it
* Object play is often mixed with physical, social or mental play – with mental play you may struggle to make matches from memory or sort out sets
* Sorting and matching fall into the category of object play
* humans have a natural tendency to sort, we seem to have an almost subconscious need to produce order from chaos

Ideas

**Basic ideas**

* Rather than one object appearing at a time, a pile of 5-10 objects appear and players have to sort through them - the players must organise piles of objects in no particular order
* Players have to organise objects in the pile in a particular order, e.g. vegetables first then fruits
* Categories can glow to indicate which needs to be sorted first (not as a memory pattern but until all of that category has been sorted)
* Could also have it so that a category glows to show that an object has be sorted here then switch to another category (only from visible items in the pile)

**Progression Ideas**

* To begin with, players are only required to sort one object at a time, unlocking more categories and objects as they progress
* After some time, players will be required to organise piles of objects into their categories, in no particular order
* Eventually players will be required to sort the piles of objects in a certain order
  + Sorting categories can glow to indicate which type of objects need to be sorted first (not necessarily as a memory pattern but until all of the objects in that category have been sorted)
  + Could also have a category glow to show that an object needs to be sorted into it, and switch to another category once a single correct object has been sorted (only using items visible in the pile)
* Sorting/planting objects will start as major activities and are likely to become less important as the player fills their planet with the objects that they like
* Over time, tending to the objects on their planet will become more important to the player
* Opportunities to perform tending activities at various intervals
  + All plants require watering at the start of their growth cycle, and at 6 hour intervals after this until fully grown
  + When fully grown, pruning replaces watering – players are given the option to prune their flowers and trees to gain a 10% flat boost to energy gained from harvesting fruit
  + START BY IMPLEMENTING WATERING AND PRUNING/DEADHEADING THEN SEE HOW IT WORKS BEFORE IMPLEMENTING ANY FURTHER TENDING MECHANICS
* Composting is no longer first new category unlock, should be reserved for late game
* Praesul will require certain tasks to be completed to maintain his happiness (these will be simple such as planting 5 carrots)
  + Doing these tasks will reward players will decorative items for their planet (this could be variants of plants; possibility of gaining 1 of 3 different variants to add variation between players planets)