

App Inventor + IoT: Read soil moisture status with LinkIt 7697



(including Arduino IDE
setup)

Level: advanced

This tutorial will help you get started with App Inventor + IoT. We are going to monitor the moisture level of your plant soil with a LinkIt 7697 (Arduino compatible) dev board. Here we are using [Seeed Studio's soil moisture sensor](#), but any other moisture sensor or analog input component, such as a potentiometer, photoresistor, or thermo-resistor, should be fine.

- [source .ino](#) / [source .aia](#)

Hardware

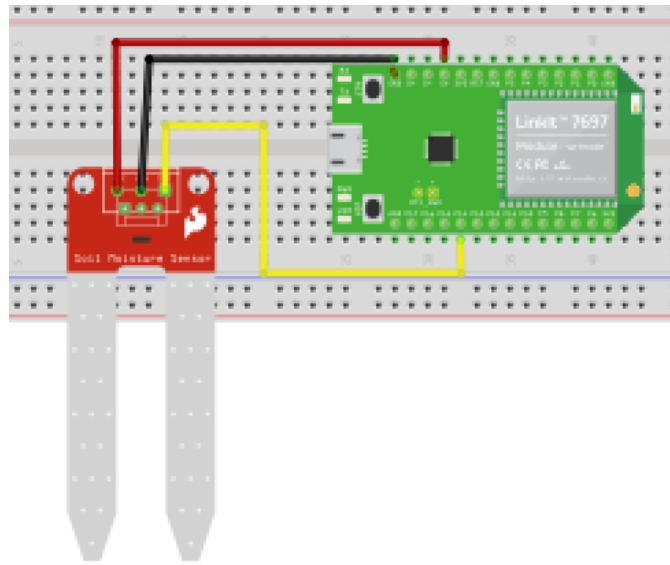
[LinkIt 7697](#) is an Arduino compatible dev board with Wi-Fi / BLE. You can use it to interface with App Inventor through BLE communication.

In this project, we are going to send moisture sensor data (connected to LinkIt 7697) to App Inventor. Here are the components we need to build this project:

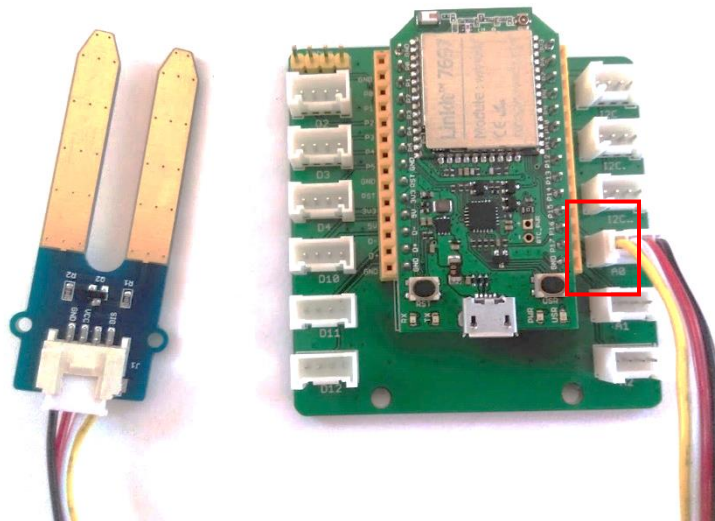
- LinkIt 7697 dev board, 1
- breadboard, 1
- wires, 3
- Any 3-pin analog moisture sensor, 1
- *[Grove soil moisture sensor](#)
- *[Grove extension shield for LinkIt 7697](#)

If you use a general 3-pin analog sensor, please connect the SIG pin to the LinkIt 7697's P14(A0), Vcc to 5V, GND to GND. This is

what it should look like when you are finished:

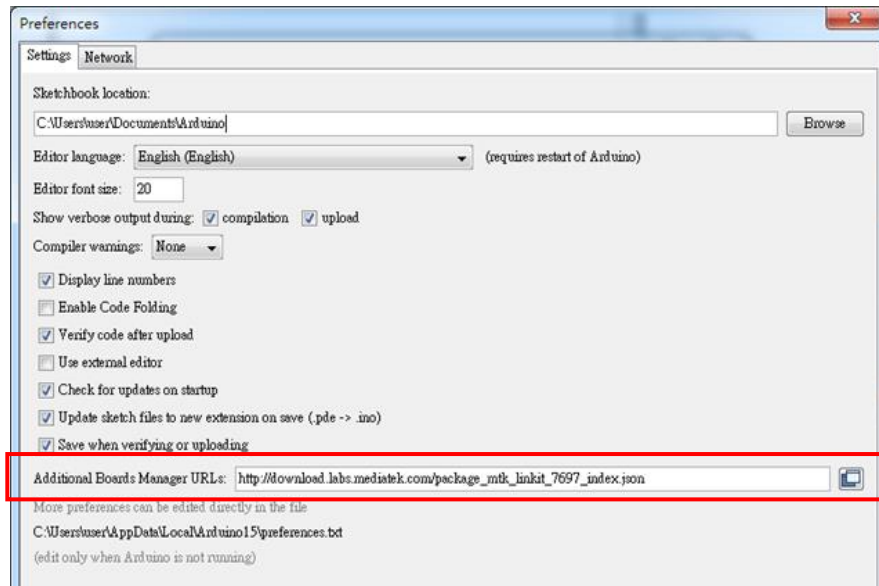


Or you can use Seeed Studio's [Grove extension shield for LinkIt 7697](#), just connect [Grove soil moisture sensor](#) to the shield's A0 port, like below:



Arduino IDE Setup

1. First get [Arduino IDE 1.8.x](#) version, download the .zip file, unzip and click arduino.exe to open the IDE.
2. From the **File/ Preference** menu, enter the link below to the Additional Boards Manager URLs field:
 - http://download.labs.mediatek.com/package_mtk_linkit_7697_index.json

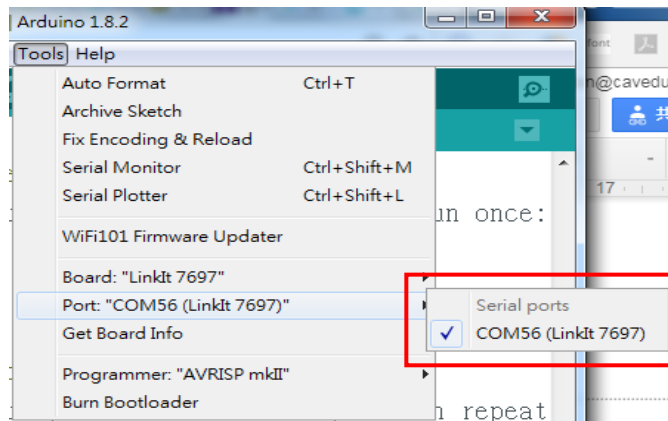


3. Open the **Tools/ Board/ Board Manager**, then search for "7697" and install the latest version of 7697 SDK.



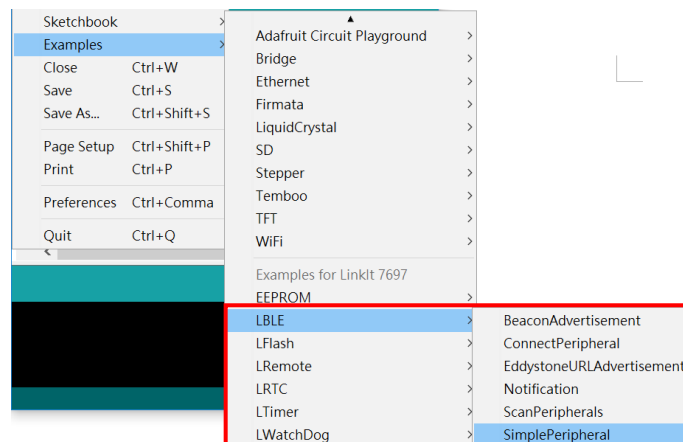
4. Download and install **CP2102N driver**([Windows](#) / [MAC/OSX](#)) , then check the COM port in your Device manager. Look for "Silicon Labs CP210 USB to UART Bridge(COMXX)", this is the COM port number of your LinkIt 7697.

5. Finally, go back to Arduino IDE and check to see if IDE has recognized your LinkIt 7697 successfully from the **Tools/Port** menu. For MAC users, it should be something like **"/dev/tty.usbserialXXX..."** and for Windows users, please check the picture below:



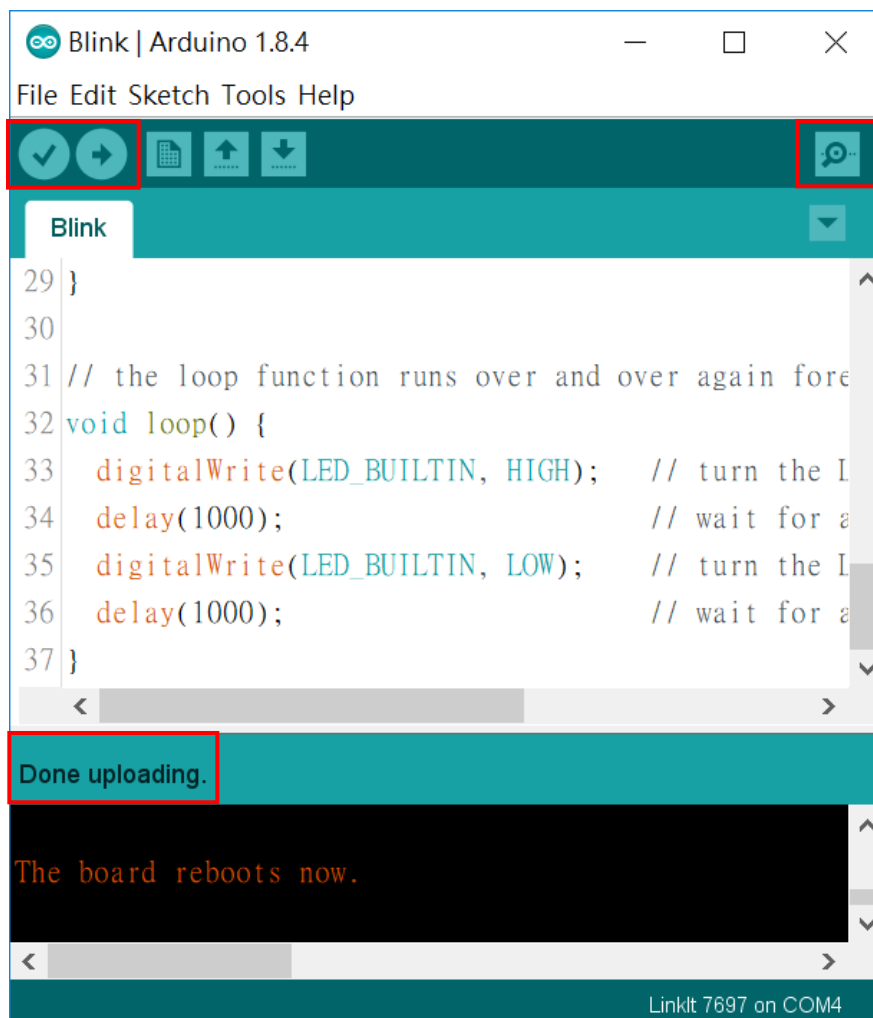
Run the Arduino sketch of this project

1. For safety reasons, not every board is marked with its Bluetooth address on the board (Arduino 101 is an exception). In Arduino IDE, first set the board to **"LinkIt 7697"** then open example **"SimplePeripheral"** from **File/Examples/LBLE** menu.

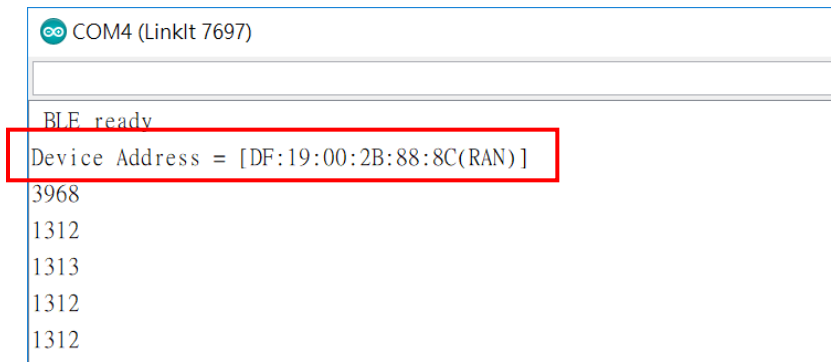


2. Set the Board from **Tools/ Board** menu to **"LinkIt 7697"** and set the COM port from **Tools/ COM port** to what you've discovered in Device Manager.

3. Connect the LinkIt 7697 to your computer with a micro-USB cable.
4. Press the **"Upload"** right-arrow button, this will compile and upload the Arduino sketch in Arduino IDE to your LinkIt 7697. Please make sure you see the **"done uploading"** message in the console below before you continue.



5. Click the magnifier icon in the up-right corner of Arduino IDE. You should see a message in the pop-up windows. The [XX:XX:XX:XX:XX:XX] 12-digit string is the Bluetooth address of your LinkIt 7697 and the following numbers are the moisture sensors data. We have to modify the **addr** variable value of your AI2 project. Now your LinkIt 7697 is ready to send sensor data to App Inventor.



App Inventor

The purpose of this project is to interact with the LinkIt 7697 dev board with App Inventor through BLE communication. The main idea is to send moisture sensor data, which is connected to the LinkIt 7697's analog pin #A0, to App Inventor, and change images according to the pin status.

Now login to your App Inventor account and create a new project.

Designer

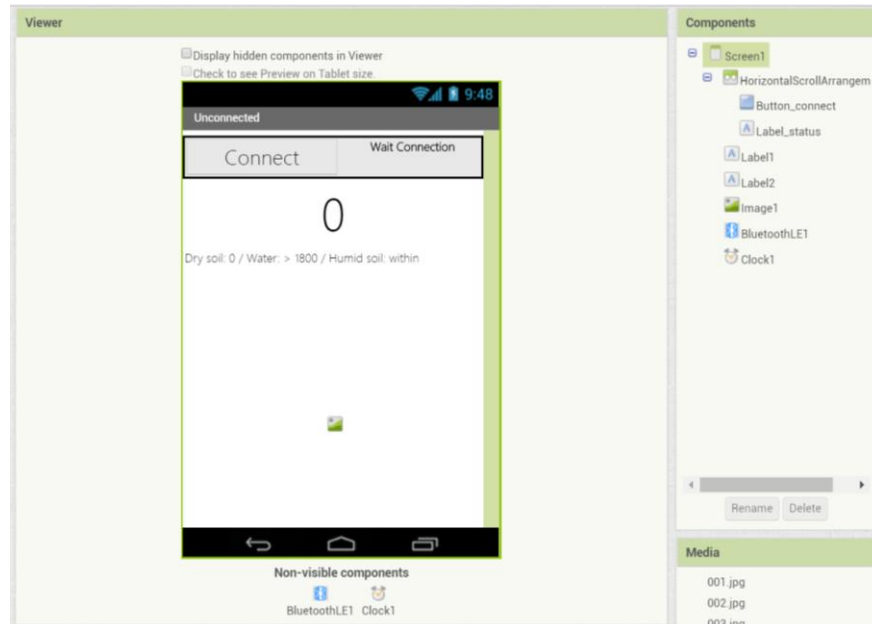
1. First, import the BLE extension from this URL:
 - <http://iot.appinventor.mit.edu/assets/com.bbc.micro:bit.profile.aix>
 - and add it to the project by dragging it into Viewer.
2. Add one **HorizontalArrangement** component from Layout drawer and set its width to "**Fill Parent...**"
3. Add one **Button** and one **Label**, then put them into a **HorizontalArrangement** component. The Button is used to connect to and disconnect from your Bluetooth device. The Label is used to show connection status.
4. Add two more **Labels**, one for displaying data from LinkIt 7697, the other for messages (Modify its text to "**Dry soil: 0 / Water: > 1800 / Humid soil: within**").
5. Add a **Clock** from the **Sensor** drawer, and set its **TimerInterval** to **100** (milliseconds). We use it to read the LinkIt 7697's

moisture sensor data 10 times per second.

6. Add an **Image** from **Media** drawer.

7. Upload three images you would like to use to represent three states of your plant.

After some adjusting, your design should be something like this. Feel free to modify the component's background color, position and text size.



Blocks

Let's look at our blocks step by step:

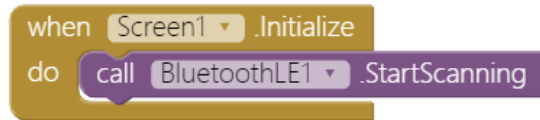
1. Variable for Bluetooth address

Please replace the **addr** variable value with what you get from Arduino's Serial Monitor, this is the Bluetooth address of LinkIt 7697.

initialize global **addr** to " 7F:0C:00:2B:88:8C "

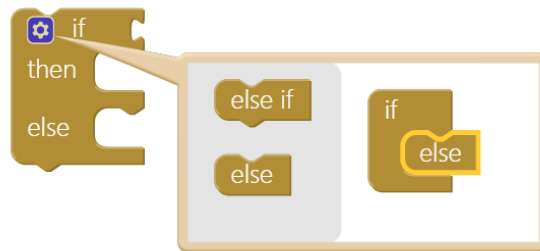
2. Initialize and connect

In **Screen1.Initialize** event, we ask **BluetoothLE** component to scan for BLE devices nearby(**BluetoothLE1.StartScanning**).

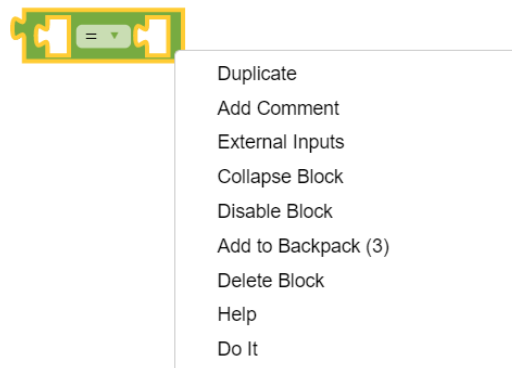


3. Button to connect and disconnect from the Bluetooth device

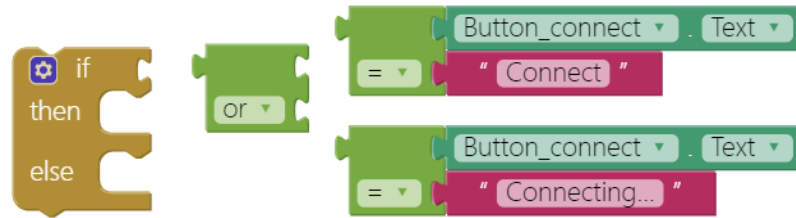
In **Button_connect.Click** event, we are going to connect or disconnect from Bluetooth device depending on the button text. First, add an **if** condition, then click its blue gear to add an **else**.



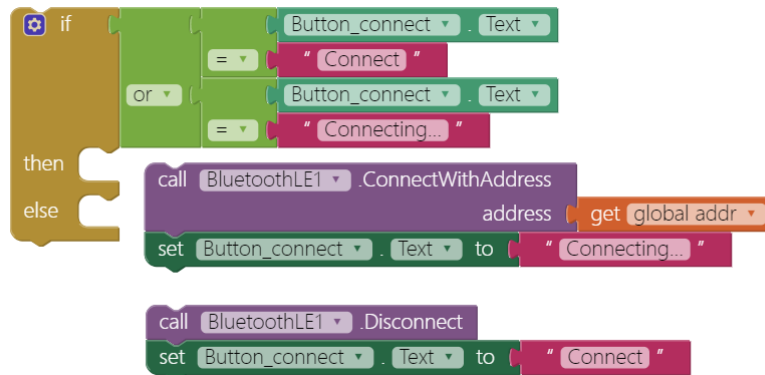
Add an **or** command from logic block, then right-click click it and select "**External Inputs**". this will make it into more rectangular shape with input on the right hand side.



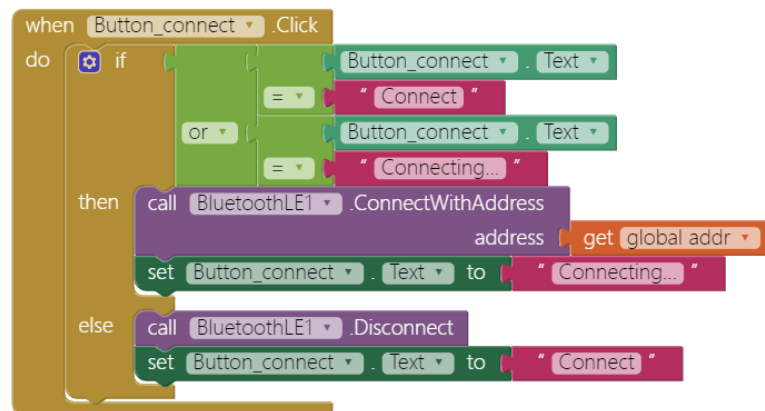
Now we want to check whether **Button_connect.Text** is "**Connect**" OR "**Connecting...**", this is how App Inventor decide to connect or disconnect Bluetooth connection with LinkIt 7697. please combine these blocks.



Good! When the **Button_connect**'s text is "**Connect**" OR "**Connecting...**", we will connect to the specified Bluetooth device (**BluetoothLE1.ConnectwithAddress**), which is our LinkIt 7697. If not, then disconnect (**BluetoothLE1.Disconnect**). In both cases, we will show a message on **Button_connect**.

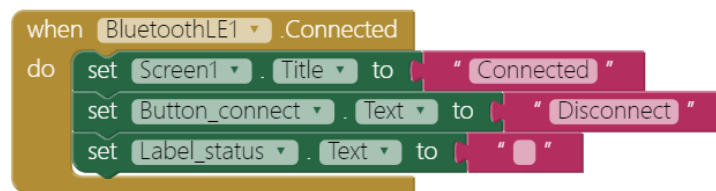


Put everything into one large **Button_connect.Click** event, the final product should look like this:



4. BLE Connected

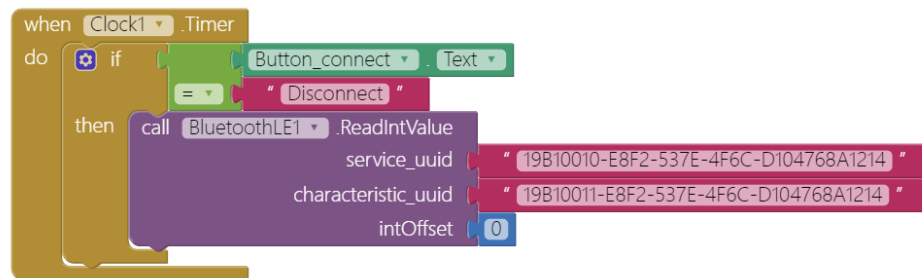
When connected successfully (**BluetoothLE.Connected** event), we show related messages on several components.



5. Ask for LinkIt 7697's moisture sensor data periodically

Since we would like to check the moisture status periodically, it is best to use a Clock component with its timer event.

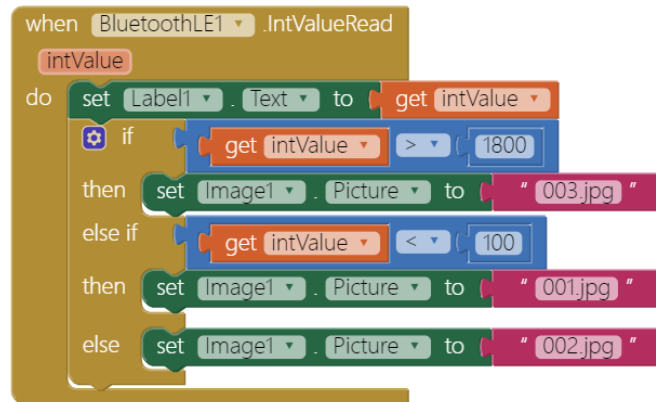
In the **Clock.Timer** event, we first check the connection and then request data from LinkIt 7697 using the **BluetoothLE.ReadInt** method. Notice that the **service_uuid** and **characteristic_uuid** must be identical with what is in the Arduino sketch.



6. Show received data on the label, and change the image

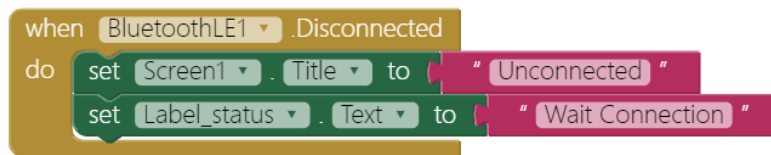
If it is read successfully, the **BluetoothLE.IntValueRead** event will be triggered. In this event, we first show the received data on Label1, and change **Image1** component's Picture to match. If the value is greater than 1800, that means the soil is too wet, so change the picture to **003.jpg**. If the value is smaller than 100, that means too dry, so change the picture to **001.jpg**. If it is within the 100 to 1800 range, that means the soil is well moisturized, so change the picture to **002.jpg**. Check the last section for the screenshots.

Note: the analog pin data ranges from 0 to 4095 (12-bit resolution). This is a bit different from Arduino (0 to 1023, 10-bit resolution).



7. Disconnect

Disconnect by clicking the **Button_connect** or pressing the USS button(D6) of LinkIt 7697. This will reset the app to its initial state, to wait for the next connection request.



Arduino code

Please download from [here](#) and upload to your LinkIt 7697.

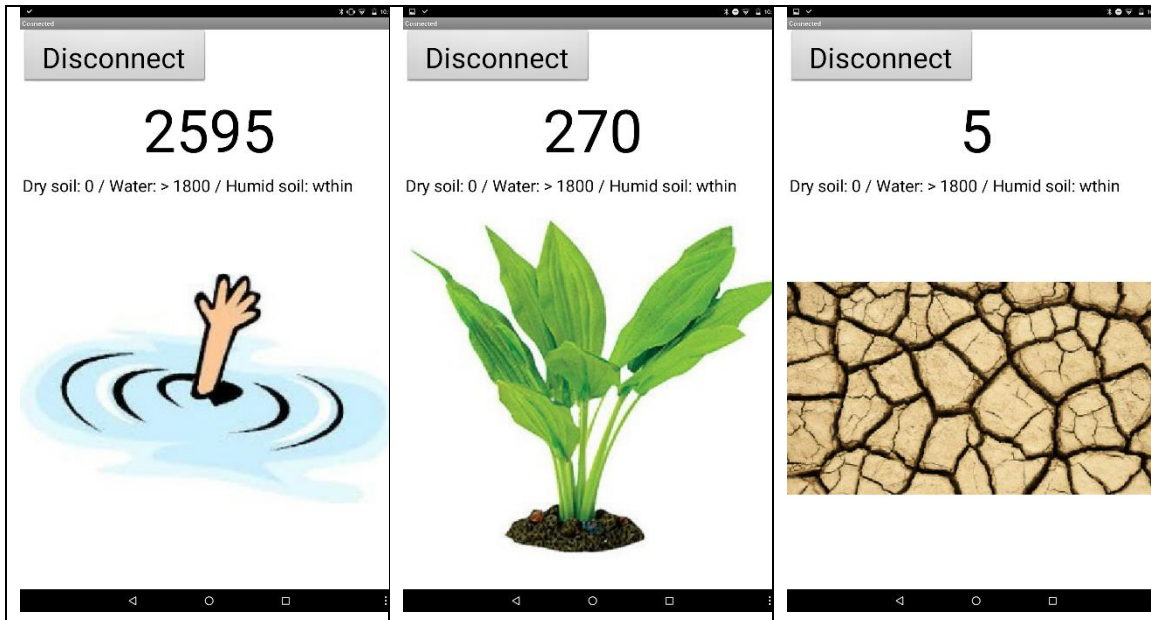
Press the "**Upload**" right-arrow button, this will compile and upload the Arduino sketch in Arduino IDE to your LinkIt 7697. Please make sure you see the "**done uploading**" message in the console.

Tips

Make sure your LinkIt 7697 is running correctly as a BLE peripheral. Open your app and click **Connect** button, you should see the larger

number in the middle of screen is varying according to your moisture sensor.

Get a cup of water, put the moisture sensor into the water, and see how the value and picture change!



Brainstorming

1. Try to use other analog input components like light sensor or potentiometer.
2. Try to add more images and show them when the sensor data is within a specific range.