

Bulbasaur

Bulbasaur^[a] is a Grass/Poison-type Pokémon species in Nintendo and Game Freak's *Pokémon* franchise. It is the first in the franchise's monster index, called a Pokédex. Designed by Atsuko Nishida,^[1] Bulbasaur debuted in *Pocket Monsters: Red and Green* (*Pokémon Red* and *Blue* outside Japan) as a starter Pokémon. Since then, it has reappeared in subsequent sequels, spin-off games, related merchandise, and animated and printed adaptations of the franchise.

Known as the Seed Pokémon, Bulbasaur can survive for days solely on sunlight. It likes to take a nap in the sunshine. While it sleeps, the seed on its back catches the rays and uses the energy to grow. It is a central character in the *Pokémon* anime, being one of Ash Ketchum's main Pokémon for the first season, and a different one later being obtained by May. It is featured in various manga, and is owned by protagonist Red in the *Pokémon Adventures* manga. Bulbasaur has been featured in myriad pieces of merchandise, including toys, key chains, and plush dolls.

Bulbasaur can evolve into Ivysaur at level 16, and can further evolve into Venusaur at level 32. Venusaur can also evolve into Mega Venusaur if the player equips it with a Venusaurite, but this feature was only first added to the Pokémon games in Pokémon X and Y.

The fan wiki Bulbapedia, a wiki dedicated solely to the Pokémon franchise, is named after Bulbasaur.

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<i>Pokémon</i> character	
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First game	<i>Pokémon Red</i> and <i>Blue</i>
Designed by	Atsuko Nishida ^[1]
Voiced by	English
	<u>Tara Sands</u> (1st-8th season)
	<u>Michele Knotz</u> (9th season–present)
	Japanese
	<u>Megumi Hayashibara</u> (Ash Ketchum's)
	<u>Miyako Itō</u> (May's)
In-universe information	
Species	Pokémon
Gender	♂ Male / ♀ Female
Type	Grass Poison
National Pokédex	Bulbasaur (#1)
Evolves into	<u>Ivysaur</u>

Conception and design

Bulbasaur was designed by Atsuko Nishida, one of the character designers for *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Blue*, who based its design on Ivysaur, the mid-evolved form of Bulbasaur.^[1] The species first appeared as one of three starter Pokémon the player could choose from at the beginning of the initial Game Boy games, *Pokémon Red* and *Blue*, released in Japan in 1996.^[2] Its Japanese name, *Fushigidane* (fu-SHI-gi-DAHNe), is a combination of the Japanese words for *mystery* or *miracle* (*fushigi*) and *seed* (*tane*).^[3] In translating the game for English speaking audiences, Nintendo gave the Pokémon "cleverly descriptive names" related to their appearance or features as a means to make the characters more relatable to American children; thus *Bulbasaur*, a portmanteau relating to both its dinosaurian appearance and the large garlic-shaped **bulb** on its back.^[4] Both the etymology and appearance of Bulbasaur, Ivysaur and Venusaur convey a transition of this Pokémon from the harmless to the dangerous as it evolves.^[5] The idea to feature Bulbasaur and the other *Red* and *Blue* starters in a significant role in *Pokémon X* and *Y* came about a year and a half into the development of the games. The Mega Evolutions for the three Pokémon's final forms were created, and the designers decided that they should give players an opportunity to receive one of these Pokémon from Professor Sycamore, the games professor, to see their Mega Evolved form.^[6]

Characteristics

Despite their English names, Ken Sugimori confirmed that the design of Bulbasaur and its evolutions are based on onions and frogs,^[7] albeit identified more with a smaller Dicynodont. In the *Pokémon* franchise, Bulbasaur are small, squat amphibian and plant Pokémon that move on all four legs, and have blue-green bodies with darker blue-green spots. As a Bulbasaur undergoes evolution into Ivysaur and then later into Venusaur, the bulb on its back blossoms into a large flower.^[8] The seed on a Bulbasaur's back is planted at birth and then sprouts and grows larger as the Bulbasaur grows.^[9] The bulb absorbs sunlight which allows it to grow, and for this reason, Bulbasaur enjoy soaking up the sun's rays.^[10] They can also survive for days without eating because the bulb stores energy.^[11] The distinctive differences of Bulbasaur from other Pokémon such as Diglett are well understood by children and so motivate their play and trading of the creature.^[12]

Appearances

In the video games

Bulbasaur made its video game debut on February 27, 1996, in the Japanese-language games *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green*.^[13] Along with Charmander and Squirtle, Bulbasaur is a starter Pokémon the player can choose from at the beginning of the games.^[14] Bulbasaur's dual typing of Grass and Poison type (<https://pokedex.net/pokedex/bulbasaur>) is in contrast to Charmander's Fire type and Squirtle's Water type.^[14] Bulbasaur is the only starter in *Red*, *Blue*, and *Green* that has a dual typing. Bulbasaur and the other starters from *Red* and *Blue* are replaced by Pikachu in *Pokémon Yellow*, the only starter available in it. Instead, they are obtained throughout the game from several NPCs.^[14] In *Pokémon FireRed* and *LeafGreen*, remakes of *Red* and *Blue*, Bulbasaur is selectable as a starter Pokémon once again, along with Charmander and Squirtle. In *Pokémon HeartGold* and *SoulSilver*, after obtaining all sixteen badges and defeating Red, the player can choose to obtain either Bulbasaur, Charmander, or Squirtle.^[15] You can also find them in the Pal Park field in *Pokémon Diamond and Pearl*, *Pokémon Platinum* and *Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver*. In *Pokémon X* and *Y*, players can also choose between Bulbasaur, Charmander, and Squirtle near the start of the game shortly after having chosen the games' new starter Pokémon. In *Pokémon Sword and Shield: The Isle Of Armor*, you can find one in the Master Dojo.

The Nintendo 64 spin-off *Pokémon Stadium*, and other spin-offs such as *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon*, give the player a choice of a Bulbasaur (among fifteen other Pokémon), and in *Pokémon Snap*, Bulbasaur are one of the Pokémon that the player can photograph.^[2] It also appears in *Pokémon Puzzle League* as one of Ash's Pokémon. Bulbasaur also appears in *Hey You, Pikachu!* as a supporting character who lives in the Ochre Woods and makes the five recipes with Pikachu's help.^[16] In *Super Smash Bros. Melee* and *Brawl*, Bulbasaur appears as one of the obtainable trophies.^{[17][18]} Bulbasaur appears in *PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure* as the host of a mini-game called "Daring Dash". In 2016, Bulbasaur was one of the four starter Pokémon in *Pokémon Go*,^[19] and appearing also in *Pokémon Unite*^[20] and *New Pokémon Snap*.^[21]

In the anime

Scenes from the *Pokémon* anime have depicted both the characters Ash and May training a Bulbasaur at different times, with Ash's Bulbasaur garnering more prominence within the storylines.^{[22][23]} Ash's Bulbasaur has remained with Ash longer than all of his other Pokémon, with the exception of his *Pikachu*. Before joining Ash's team, it lives with a girl named Melanie, who takes care of abandoned Pokémon.^[22] Bulbasaur is given to Ash, but it is pessimistic about him. However, its loyalties begin to improve and it eventually becomes one of Ash's most faithful Pokémon.^{[22][23]} May catches a Bulbasaur while traveling in a grass-type Pokémon *nature reserve* during her journey in *Hoenn*. Bulbasaur defends her from the other grass Pokémon in the forest, who see her as a threat, and when May leaves, Bulbasaur decides to go with her.^[24] She later makes a guest appearance on the series and it is revealed that her Bulbasaur has fully evolved into a Venusaur.^[25]

In the original Japanese version the two Bulbasaur are each played by separate voice actresses, Ash's Bulbasaur by Megumi Hayashibara and May's by Miyako Itō. In the English *dub*, they are both *voiced* by Tara Jayne until Michele Knotz took over the job for the ninth season.

In other media

Bulbasaur is featured in an eclectic range of different *Pokémon* manga series. In *Pokémon: Pikachu Shocks Back*, *Electric Pikachu Boogaloo*, and *Surf's Up, Pikachu!*, which loosely parallel the storyline of the anime, Pikachu is separated from Ash temporarily, and travels with a Bulbasaur to a secret Pokémon village in the mountains. Later, Ash finds Pikachu and catches the Bulbasaur. Bulbasaur accompanies Ash throughout his journeys in the *Orange Islands*, and eventually fights in the final showdown with *Drake*, the Orange Crew Supreme Gym Leader. In *Magical Pokémon Journey*, a character named Pistachio has a female Bulbasaur (nicknamed Danerina in the Japanese version), who is infatuated by him.^[26]

In *Pokémon Adventures*, a manga based on the plot of the *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* games, the character *Red* receives a Bulbasaur from *Professor Oak*, which he nicknames Saur.^[27] In Chapter 15, "Wartortle Wars", it evolves into an Ivysaur after battling a wild *Mankey*.^[28] A Bulbasaur owned by *Red* appeared in the first episode of *Pokémon Generations*. Bulbasaur is the main character of two *Pokémon children's books*, *Pokémon Tales Volume 3: Bulbasaur's Trouble* and *Bulbasaur's Bad Day*, published in 1999 and 2000 respectively by Sagebrush.^{[29][30]} In *Pokémon Tales Volume 3: Bulbasaur's Trouble*, Bulbasaur resolves an argument between two other Pokémon.^[30] In *Bulbasaur's Bad Day*, *Meowth* traps Bulbasaur in a pit and it has to outwit Team Rocket (the *antagonists* of the *Pokémon* anime) to escape.^[29] Bulbasaur also appears in the movie *Pokémon: Detective Pikachu*, where they helps lead Pikachu for *Mewtwo* to heal.^[31] In making the film, a bulldog was used to understand the top-heavy movement of Bulbasaur. Then puppeteers in London were hired to create 3D puppets of it. Facial expressions and texture details were added using CGI.^[32]

Bulbasaur is set to be featured alongside other iconic Generation I Pokémon in a version of the *Labyrinth* board game in 2021.^[33]

Promotion and merchandising

Bulbasaur has been featured in varying pieces of merchandise, including toys and plush dolls.^[34] Bulbasaur has been depicted in action figures sold by Hasbro in the United States, while Tomy in Japan sold extensive merchandise of the character, including vinyl dolls, wind-up model kits, Singaporean popcorn,^[35] and terry cloth bean bags.^[36] It has also been used in promotional merchandising at fast-food chains such as McDonald's and Burger King.^{[37][38]} Bulbasaur has also been included in various versions of the Pokémon painting on ANA Boeing 767s.^[39] In 2021, Seiko made limited edition luxury watches based on Bulbasaur and its evolutionary family. The watches also depict its famous Solar Beam attack.^[40] The island nation of Niue issued a commemorative coin with a legal tender value of one crown which has a Bulbasaur on the reverse side.^[41]

Bulbasaur was also among the eleven Pokémon chosen as Japan's mascots in the 2014 FIFA World Cup.^[42]

Reception and legacy

Bulbasaur has been largely praised by critics for its appearance, especially in the *Pokémon* anime. *Nintendo World Report*'s Pedro Hernandez called it his favorite Pokémon, noting that it represented a number of firsts for him: his first episode of the anime, his first Pokémon, and the first one he saw in 3D. Calling Bulbasaur the reason he became interested in the *Pokémon* series, he stated that he was "deeply touched" by how it refused to evolve in the anime in order to "prove his self-worth as his un-evolved form".^[43] IGN editor "Pokémon of the Day Chick" also praised Ash's "attitude-packing Bulbasaur" in the anime,^[44] and *Official Nintendo Magazine*'s John Vekinis attributed his "love of Grass-type Pokémon" to Bulbasaur in spite of the Grass type's weaknesses.^[45]

Chris Plante of *Polygon* called Bulbasaur "the best *Pokémon* all along", citing that series producer and director Junichi Masuda defended Bulbasaur as the best starter Pokémon, calling it "really cute, as a character," and "a very *Pokémon*-like Pokémon" that "kind of exemplifies what *Pokémon* is for me" due to its monster and plant combination. Plante called Bulbasaur and its evolutions "comparably dull", but, nevertheless, stated that they were "the most true to life", as it looked more "leathery and aged" as it got older in comparison to the other starters.^[46] Cass Marshall and Julia Lee of the same publication described Bulbasaur on *Detective Pikachu* as "unassuming and sweet," a creature who makes a "lovable friend."^[31]

Notes

a. Pronounced ⁱ/ˈbʌlbəˌsɔːr/. Known as **Fushigidane** (フシギダネ) in Japan

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