

Sequoia Mortars

Description: It looks remarkably like a World War II American M2 Mortar, if they had been made out of rich, brown-inlaid wood (and glowed faintly blue in the dark). Unlike most Elvish items, Sequoia Mortars appear to be mass... 'produced?' 'Grown?' 'Conjured?' There's also an extremely death-tinged magical aura about them that many mages find unpleasant. They're not quite Evil weapons, but they're closer to ones than you'd normally expect Elves to get.

To use, aim the Sequoia Mortar at your target (typical range is about one quarter to one half mile). Drop in the payload (a modified Sequoia pine cone; the payload is *very* expensive and *hideously* rare) and enough mana to get the pine cone launched and distributed. Once the Mortar's been fired, either fire it again, or grab it and run like the devil. Enemy mages *will* come looking for you.

Once at the top of its arc, the Sequoia Mortar round will disintegrate, causing its seeds (typically about sixty viable ones per cone) to descend straight down above the target, ignoring wind. Once they land, the seeds will rapidly mature into a sequoia sapling. *Extremely* rapidly: a

sequoia tree seeded by this method will reach full maturity in 5 years. Worse, the sequoia's growth will be fuelled via frankly necromantic means: these things suck out all the sentient life force within five hundred feet. Spend more than fifteen minutes in the presence of a growing Sequoia Mortar tree, and you'll be too weak to move. Spend more than a half hour, and you'll never move again. The death field dissipates after the tree matures in five years, which is a lot shorter-term to an Elf than it is to a Human or Orc; and it's otherwise a normal tree. So: excellent for clearing out stubborn legionary camps and/or walled colonies.

The only reason Elves can get away with using Sequoia Mortars is because Elves generally do not engage in wars of aggression. These are explicitly guerrilla weapons, and they **only** get broken out when invaders manage to viciously conquer a significant portion of Elvish lands. Using them offensively absolutely infuriates the other races; using them defensively usually just results in indifferent shrugs. A sentient race has a right to defend itself against aggressors, right? But by the same token: nobody says anything when it turns out that Elves caught with a Sequoia Mortar invariably decide to fight to the death, rather than be captured. Mess with death magic, accept the consequences.

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