**Site of Documentation**

Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia

**Description**

*Leaf Shooting* is a favourite game for boys from rural Malay communities living in Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia. In the game, players have to shoot arrows made from palm leaves at an enemy team. Three direct hits eliminates an opponent from the game; the first team to eliminate all of their opponents, wins!

**Who Plays?**

This game requires a minimum of 2 players. Both boys and girls can play aged 10 years or older.

**Accessories/Equipment**

To play *Leaf Shooting* participants must first collect approximately 30 to 60 Palm tree leaves (or leaves from a similar palm type frond). Abundant in tropical countries such as Malaysia, palm trees are often found growing wild in the vicinity of the players' houses and the leaves are easily plucked by hand. The best leaves are those plucked from the middle of each palm frond, as they are typically long, wide and soft, which makes them ideal for shooting long distances.
Time and Place

The game is played outdoors (in the vicinity of palm trees) at any time of day as long as the weather is cool and dry. The game can not be played when it has been recently raining as wet palm leaves do not shoot as effectively as dry ones. If the game is being played by a pair of players, a round of the game takes as little as 5 minutes. When played in groups, the game takes a little longer; approximately 10 and 15 minutes.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

This game is a test of the player’s precision, agility and team work skills. The best players are those who can accurately select the strongest materials to make their weapon from (often choosing harder, more durable leaves) and can construct their arrows with speed. Once they have their weapon in hand, the player must also have an excellent aim and be able to shoot their leaf over long distances so that they hit their opponents.

Popularity

As a shooting game, this game is most popular with boys in the local community. The game was mostly learned from friends and is practiced frequently to improve the player’s skill.

History

This game was also played by members of the older generations, although it has gained popularity over time. Back then, the children would make additional game tools such as bullets with which to shoot their opponents.

Preparation

1. First, players need to pick 30 to 60 fresh palm leaves that are shared with the group. The exact number they pick will depend on how many of children are participating in the game.

2. The leaves should be plucked by hand from the tree, taking care to select those from the middle of the frond, which are wide, soft and strong.
How is the Game Played?

Step 1. Players need to divide themselves into two equal sized teams. Both teams have to select an area that gives them protection from attack but also allows them to shoot and hit their opponents.

![Image of children playing with leaves](image1.jpg)

Step 2. The players must now each construct their arrows:

1. Each player must pick up a leaf and hold it upside down, so that the tip is pointing towards the ground.

![Image of hands holding a leaf](image2.jpg)
2. They must then tear their leaf in half, stripping the left side of the leaf away from the stem by peeling it from the broadest end of the leaf right down to the tip.

3. Next, they need to peel off approximately 3 cm of the remaining half of the leaf from the broadest end, leaving a short section of stem exposed.
4. Then, they need to slip the torn flap of leaf between the second and third finger of their left hand. The exposed section of stem should be pointing towards the opponent and the fine tip should point towards the player.

5. Finally, each player needs to swiftly tear the remainder of the leaf away (towards their body), while pulling the exposed stem in the direction they want to shoot it. If the player releases the stem at the right moment, it should fly out towards the enemy.
Step 3. Both teams need to construct and shoot arrows at each other from the safety of their base. Any player who is hit by an arrow three times is eliminated from the game. The first team to eliminate all of their opponents wins the game.

Rules

1. No physical fighting is allowed by players of either team.

2. Players are allowed to move around and hide during the game.

3. Small injuries are possible but unlikely. Players that cause an injury usually do so unintentionally and do not have to take responsibility for it.

4. Players are not allowed to aim at any part of another player’s body above the chest, especially the face and eyes.

5. If playing in pairs or small groups, players can also play a variation on the game. Rather than trying to hit an opponent, the players simply draw a line and shoot their leaves from the same spot. The players that can shoot their leaf the furthest wins.