

Cold this Winter? Try Some Tropical Farming with Tiki Farm

Christopher Mack, *Inside Social Games*
December 21, 2009

While games such as FarmVille and Farm Town are currently going the winter wonderland route (in terms of virtual goods) a new farming title from Playdom is taking a different approach. Many are probably wishing for a nice, warm tropical setting now that we're getting deeper into winter. So, Tiki Farm, one of the developer's most recent titles, is here to help make that wish come true.

The last time we went farming in the tropics was with Meteor Games' Island Paradise, and while the basic premise is the same, Island Paradise is a more Robinson Crusoe feel. We should also note that other themes have recently changed latitudes, like new theme park-style game Happy Island from CrowdStar. Tiki Farm is reminiscent of Cancun or Honolulu. However, it is, like its predecessors, your standard farming app. Players plow land, plant crops, sell them, and repeat, all the while decorating the virtual farm space granted to them. It's as simple as that.

Just like with the mafia-style role playing games, the farming genre is pretty cut-and-paste. Nonetheless, it is curious to see it following similar patterns in the fact that we are starting to see different flavors of the same core game play. This is fairly common for video games in general, and social games in particular — Zynga's Mafia Wars, Fashion Wars, and Dragon Wars are all the same basic role-playing game, yet one has you as the modern "bad guy," another a socialite, and another a fantasy hero.

The lesson here, however, is that these different themes allowed the company to attract different user tastes and demographics. This is something new farming app developers should consider. Don't get into the cage with a 900 pound gorilla, right? In other words, if people want to play a farming game that looks like real farming, they're probably going to play FarmVille; Playdom seems to have realized this, thus the tropical feel.

Frankly, Tiki Farm is refreshing. Everything about the game is warm and pleasant-looking. The colors are vibrant and saturated, and the music does help to set the mood (though it does wear on you after awhile). Even the types of crops themselves add to the island look and feel; they range from sugarcane to birds of paradise.

In fact, all of the décor adds volumes to the style. While any game dealing with a virtual space can always benefit from more decorative items, Tiki Farm allows players to go either the beach patron's route with patio sets, beach chairs, and coolers or the islander direction with stick fences, totems, and giant tiki heads.

Truth be told, there really isn't much to complain about with Tiki Farm other than the fact that it's another farming game. The visual style is great, the sound fits the mood, and assuming more items will be added, the current number of decorative objects more than suffices. In fact, the game even has a few game play and usability bonuses as well, including extra steps such as clearing bugs and the ability to queue up actions when you are planting multiple seeds or plowing new plots. You can even pick up and move a plot if you made a mistake (rather than having to delete and redo it completely).

Currently, Tiki Farm is sitting at just above 500,000 monthly active users, and has been growing faster over the past four days. Considering the quality and style of the game — as well as the cross-promotion and advertising that Playdom is probably doing — this is a trend likely to continue in the coming weeks. In the end, if you are looking for a new, yet different, farming game, or your just feeling a bit chilly this winter, this is one app worth a try.