

Elephant Grass



Enchantment



Cumulative upkeep 1

Black creatures cannot attack you.  
Nonblack creatures cannot attack you  
unless their controller pays an additional  
2 for each attacking creature.

*“How have I angered nature that she would  
imprison me in a labyrinth of grass?”*  
—Kasib ibn Naji, Letters

Illus. Tony Roberts

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# Elephant Grass for Gmail: Bitcoin-powered spam control

## Lessons Learned

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<https://github.com/timbowwhite/elephant-grass-gmail>

# Problem: Targeted Spam

**From:** Asshat Recruiter

**Subject:** Wednesday 3pm?

**Body:**

Hey, Jesse. I noticed Kraken is hiring devs so I'd like to waste your time on Wednesday at 3pm. Cool?

Sincerely,  
Asshat

# Solution: Make Them Pay

Whitelist Contacts

Charge everyone else 0.0005 bitcoin

If sender is not in Contacts, filter message to payment-pending folder, auto respond with payment request. If payment received, move to payment-complete.

Requirement: No 3rd party access to my mail

# People Were Outraged

**From:** Jamie Zawinski

**Subject:** Re: upcoming DNA Lounge events

**Body:**

You must be THIS TALL to use email.

You are a pinhead. Get off the internet.



# People Were Outraged

That sounds a lot like YOUR PROBLEM which you are trying to make be MY PROBLEM.

I'm sorry that dealing with spam filters is too hard for you without trying to shift the cost onto literally everyone else. Maybe you should consider not using computers.

What you are doing has been widely acknowledged as both an asshole move and completely ineffective for literally decades:

<http://marc.merlins.org/netrants/challenge-response.html>



# Challenge-Response Anti-Spam Systems Considered Harmful

0. Weak, and trivially abused, verification basis.
1. Mistaken interpretation of anti-spam goals
2. Misplaced burden.
3. Privacy violation.
4. Less effective at greater burden than receiver-side whitelisting.
5. High type II error (beta).

# Challenge-Response Anti-Spam Systems Considered Harmful

6. Potential "Joe-job" denial of service.
7. C-R - C-R deadlock
8. Potential integration into spam email harvest systems.
9. Likely consequences: C-R messages and users blacklisted or spamfiltered
10. Mailing list burden.
11. Fails to address techno-economic underpinnings of spam.

# Results

Error Message Count

Service using too much computer time for one day 320

We're sorry, a server error occurred. Please wait a bit and try again. 1

Details:

Start Function Error Message Trigger End

12/3/15 9:18 PM processInboxCheckPayments Service using too much computer time for one day time-based 12/3/15 9:18 PM



# Results

- More spam than ever
- Likely got my own email address blacklisted
- Now instead of looking through my spam folder, I look through payment-pending, and it's worse than spam ever was.
- Elephant Grass still useful for filtering Gmail on Contacts (not possible natively).

# Fun Stuff

Hey!

I would like to tell you that Ashley Madison was recently hacked, and now I have all the information about your online affairs and even the cheatings you did. I have located all your social networking and dating website profiles, and using this I am going to send message to all of your friends and family members about this.

Well, for sure, you would feel ashamed if I tell your family members and friends about this, and it would be even more worse, when you meet them face to face. Wondering how to prevent me from doing this? Its simple, you need to send just 1 Bitcoin (i.e One BTC) to the following Bitcoin address:

1BXgGTQdNfPp9LtUr895VFqu8WVTtkmNvh

# Next Steps

- Need cooperation of mail service providers
- Need wallet browser plugin to make micropayment faster/automatic (for other purposes too)
- Need new email address

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