TEAM OCTOBOX

Design Brief for User Feedback Event

IAT 402 – Interdisciplinary Design Studio
Instructor: Thecla Schiphorst
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Samanthi Jayetileke | Kurtis Beard | Andrew Thong | Derek Pante
Kiks Chua | Manuel Pineault | Brian Quan

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Focus Group:

Our team has selected the 1-on-1 Interview methodology.

Event Logistics

a) We plan to find five-six willing participants to contribute/participate in twenty minute interviews to be held at Simon Fraser University -- specifically, the Surrey Campus in a private team room. Our target group consists of men and women who live in relatively small living spaces and have an interest in gardening. Preferably, these candidates would also have modernized taste in furniture and a design-oriented personality. Given the complications in finding people with the aforementioned characteristics, we've narrowed are search to the following characteristics: garden enthusiasts and design-oriented individuals.

Event Description

b) We've decided that the 1-on-1 interview methodology is most fitting for our project in light of the following reasons/arguments:

1. We feel that this form encourages a more casual, but intimate atmosphere where a conversational interview can transpire. Ideally, we'd like the interviewees to feel that they can share their tastes, preferences, and unique perspectives in detail without the influence of external forces (which could potentially inform biases).
2. The form supports a controllable environment.
3. The form allows our team to establish a structure that can be improved over successive interviews. In short, it's not a one-shot opportunity.
4. The form allows for a shorter time demand – a value that will likely appeal to potential interviewees (in the sense that we won't take up too much of their time).

Resources

c) We plan on centralizing the majority of our interview on verbal communication. Thus, we will be relying heavily on a series of open-ended questions. Although we've prepared a mood diagram, user personas, an interface mock-up, and a series of sketches that illustrate the physical components of our project, these elements will be introduced towards the end of our interview (the final stage). We'd like the interview process to promote the interviewee's ideation and encourage them to share their perceptions of our project. While the structure of our interview provides the interviewee with a concrete context, we're hoping that these individuals share their conceptual model of our project in our brief time together. Please see appendix for examples of these resources (i.e. our mood board, sketches, etc.).

Data Recording

d) Our recording will be completed through a series of modes. Most importantly, we will be taking notes during the interviews. To supplement this, we will utilize a recording device for reference after the interviews are completed (and in case, we miss or overlook any crucial points). Finally, for visual purposes, we will take a series of photos during the interview (for use on the website, etc.).

Event Activities

e) We divided our interview process into a series of three stages; while these stages may not immediately reflect "activities," we feel that each stage is carefully planned to maximize the time we have with the interviewees (in order to generate effective feedback).

1. Firstly, we begin the interview session by briefing outlining a broad, but concrete context for our project. We inform the user of our intent and a series of related concepts (gardening, nature, etc.). We will ask a series of open-ended questions in regards to the interview's desired values in products (with respect to quality, material, and affordability). It is absolutely crucial that we allow the user to ideate with a basic outline and context without becoming influenced by a detailed description of our project (we want to derive original, unbiased tastes and opinions). In short, we'd like the user to define the constraints for us; afterwards, we can compare the interviewee's suggestions with our own.
2. Secondly, we'll continue this process by introducing the project in its most simplistic form (the element of furniture, aesthetic design, urban vs. natural spaces). In this stage, we will also draw from John Maeda's Law concerning "context" and "the one." In short, we will engage with the idea of adding meaning to see where a relationship can be taken. We can then see what can evolve from the aesthetic design, the relationship between nature and technology, and the project's integrity and values. This will involve questions that ponder how much is too much/too little. Ultimately, this stage will allow us to ideate further (at a level more attune to our project idea).
3. Finally, we will present our full-scale project concept in its entirety. This will involve observing how the user reacts and engages with our resources (the mood board, the interface mock-up, and the prototype sketches). As such, we can derive specific feedback in terms of preferences and personal tastes that immediately inform the design of our project. This stage will consist largely of interaction-related discussion.

Timeline

f) The structure and overall time frame of each individual interview will consist of the following:

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW STRUCTURE	
INTERVIEW PHASES	**TIME**
Introduction	1 Minute
Stage 1	6 Minutes
Stage 2	6 Minutes
Stage 3	8 Minutes
Reflection	2 Minutes

Appendix:

Appendix: Project Definition

Introductory Project Overview:

“Sustain-a-stack” is a product that aims to bridge the gap between natural and urban environments. Where space can often dictate the presence of nature in the home setting, “Sustain-a-Stack” integrates plant life into modern and stylish furniture. Effectively, this product positions nature as a focal point in living spaces without compromising the value of consumer space. Further in establishing both physical and digital indications of plant growth, this product enhances the relationship between the consumer and his/her natural environment.

Appendix: Project Logistics

The Sustain-A-Stack project intends to develop a unification of both urban and natural environments. Our development team intends to confirm that it is possible to contain self-supporting ecosystems within enclosed structures such as furniture. While the end goal would be to develop the product that can house a variety of ecosystems from mini gardens to small aquariums, the team has decided that focusing on the flora aspect of the project is our main priority. The prototyping team has already proven that we can supply artificial light for photosynthesis in an energy-efficient manner.

As another equally important element of this project, our team is determined to create an aesthetically pleasing product. While our initial designs consist largely of boxes that stack like LEGO bricks, we must explore other possibilities as well. After all, if we intend this to be a piece of furniture, the role of design aesthetics is a crucial point of consideration. In short, we aim to have the end-user proudly displaying the Sustain-A-Stack in their living rooms.

As we are developing this project with user interaction in mind, it is crucial to maintain effectively balanced interaction between the user and the product. However, given our target audience, it is important to minimize the product's dependency on digital systems as much as possible. With that in mind, we intend to manage the system using a physical computing platform such as the Arduino. Effectively, this platform can be manipulated to elements such as water, light, and moisture within each stack.

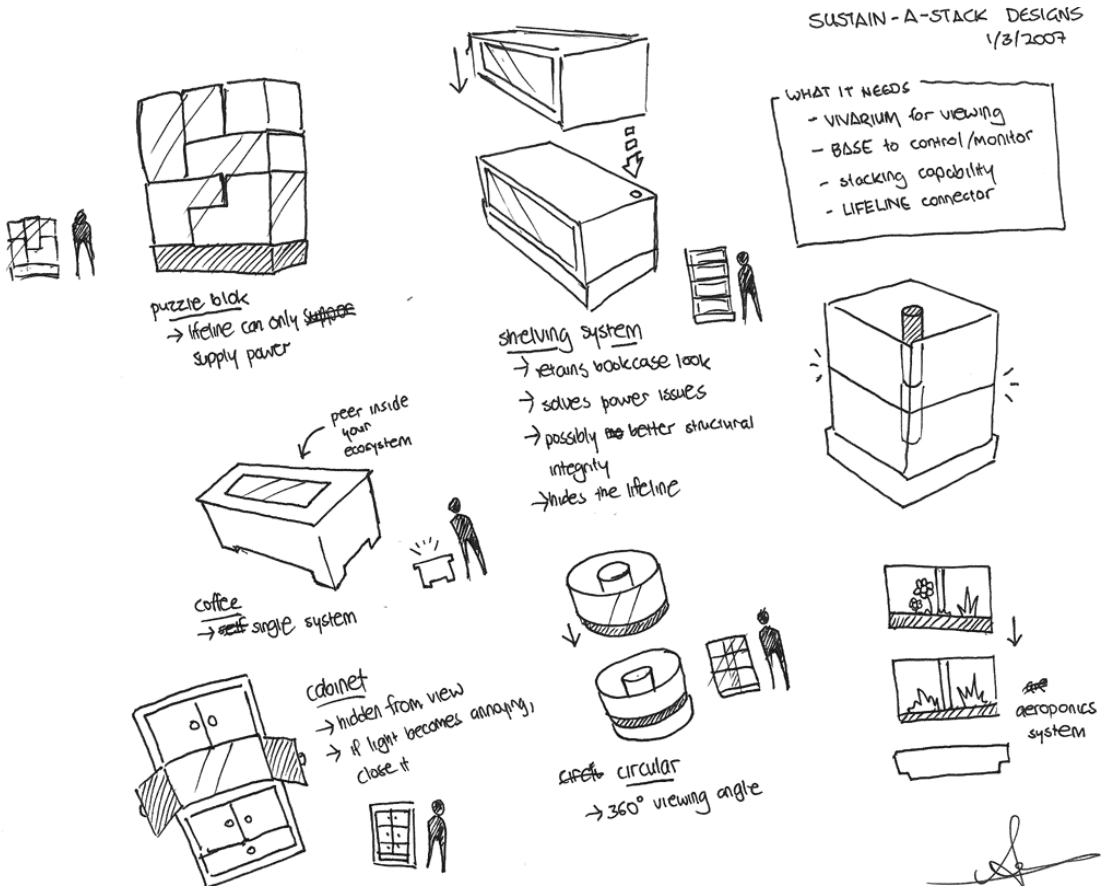
Ultimately, we expect this project to unify spaces and environments that appear to be growing further and further apart. In doing so, we can re initiate a bond between the consumer and his/her natural environment.

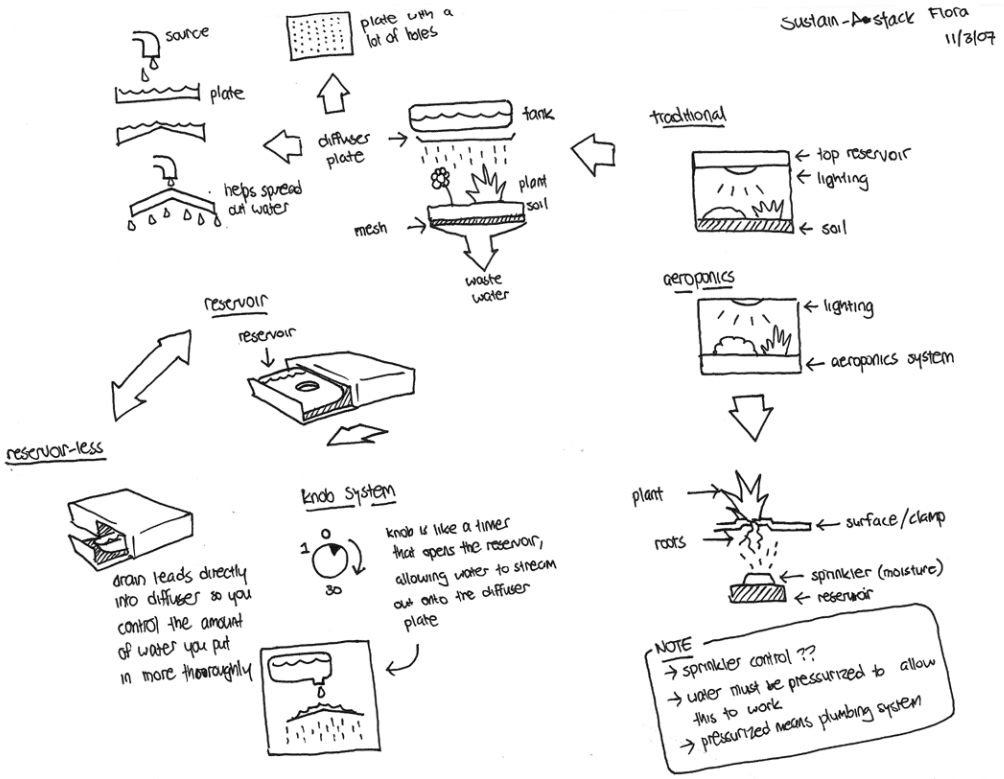
Appendix: Sketches

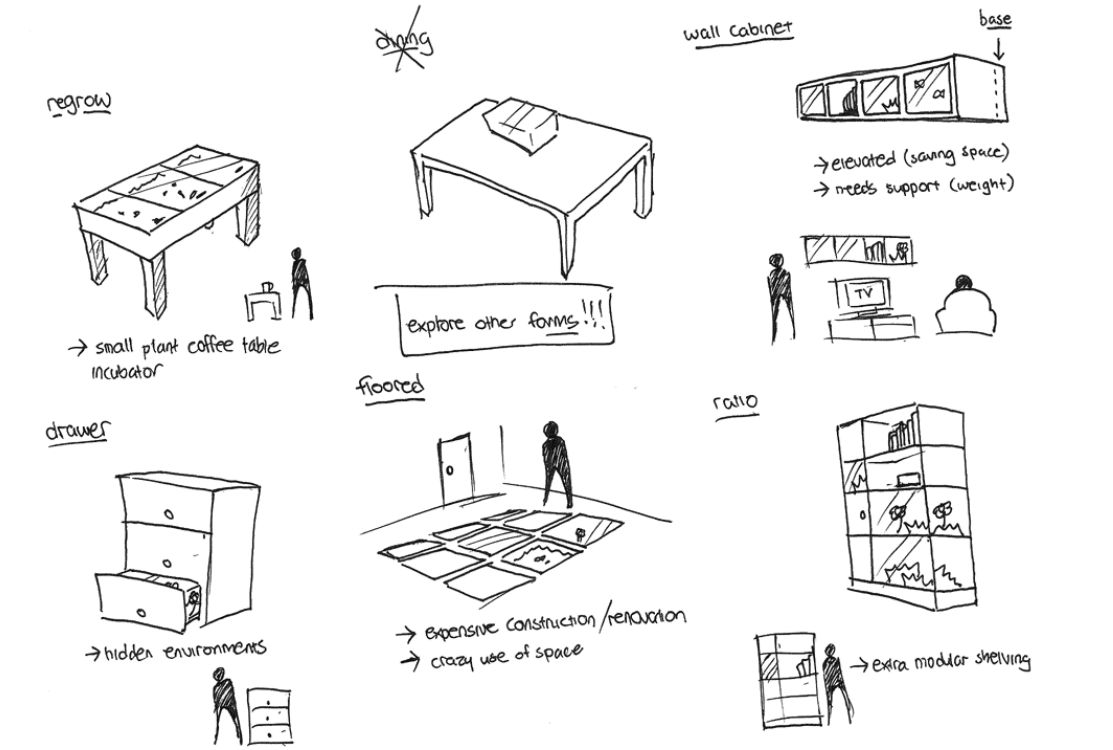
1) Different Aesthetic Designs (shape/structure)

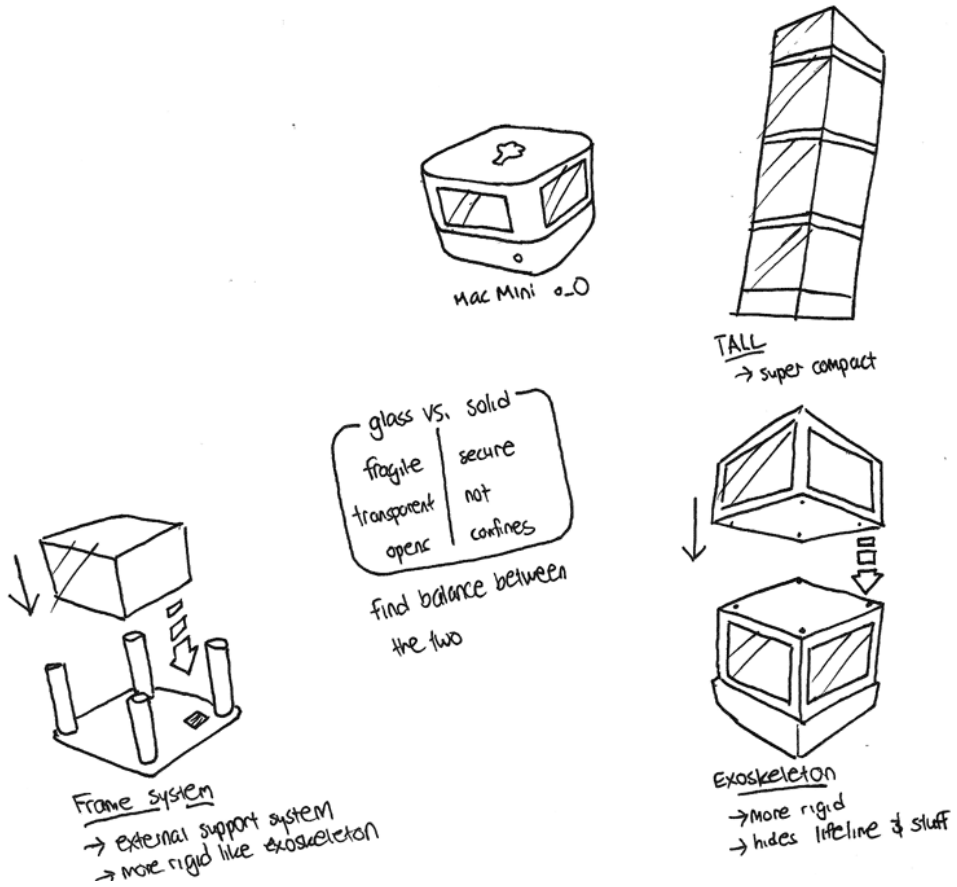
1. **Components of Current Models**
   - I. The Non-Aeroponic Model
     - a) dial for light
     - b) button for water-spray mechanism
   - II. The Aeroponic Model
     - a) dial for light
     - b) dial for water exposure (via holes)

2. **Stack Components**
   - I. The Exposed Model (Recessed Glass)
   - II. Water Reservoir
   - III. Base Accessibility
   - IV. Internal Designs (Troubleshooting)




Sustain-A-stack Flora
11/3/07
source
plate
plate with a lot of holes
diffuser plate
tank
plant
soil
mesh
waste water
helps spread out water
traditional
top reservoir
lighting
soil
aeroponics
lighting
aeroponics system
reservoir
reservoir
reservoir-less
drain leads directly into diffuser so you control the amount of water you put in more thoroughly
knob system
knob is like a timer that opens the reservoir, allowing water to stream out onto the diffuser plate
plant
roots
surface/clamp
sprinkler (moisture)
reservoir
NOTE
→ sprinkler control ??
→ water must be pressurized to allow this to work
→ pressurized means plumbing system


Sustain-a-stack designs
→ 11/6/2007
regrow
→ small plant coffee table incubator
dining
explore other forms!!!
wall cabinet
base
→ elevated (saving space)
→ needs support (weight)
TV
floored
→ expensive construction/renovation
→ crazy use of space
ratio
→ extra modular shelving
drawer
→ hidden environments



Appendix: Materials

MATERIALS LIST	
MATERIAL	**USAGE**
Glass	▪ Acrylic Glass (Impact Resistant, Lighter) ▪ Lexan (More Strength for Extra Cost) ▪ Tempered Glass
Plastic Exterior	▪ With Color Palette ▪ Green ▪ Comes in five colors!
Soil / Plastic Holder	▪ Non Aeroponics / Aeroponics
Liquid Solution	▪ Fertilization
Arduino	▪ Use Bluetooth for Transmission ▪ Separate Power Source
Wiring	▪ Mechanics
LEDs/LED Bulb	▪ Light Source
Plants	▪ Vegetables & Herbs

Appendix: Questions for User Feedback Event

1. FORM/AESTHETICS

- What type of plants do you grow in indoor settings?
- Would you be interested in growing herbs and vegetables indoors?
- How important is aesthetics in furniture?

2. VALUES (purchasing?)

- What would make you buy our product over a flower pot?
- What might hinder you from buying our product?
- What do you look for in a product? (quality, return investment, status, functionality)
- What do you value in the product?
- Do you think the product is consistent with the team's goals?
- Will this make your life more simple/easier?

3. INTERACTION (how much is too little/too much?)

- What are ways that you can develop a better relationship with plants?
- What is the most satisfying interaction you have with plants?
- What aspect of gardening do you most value?
- Will this product make your life easier/more pleasurable?
- How important is technology in interaction?
- Do you see yourself using the product?
- Where can you visualize this product being used in your home? (location)

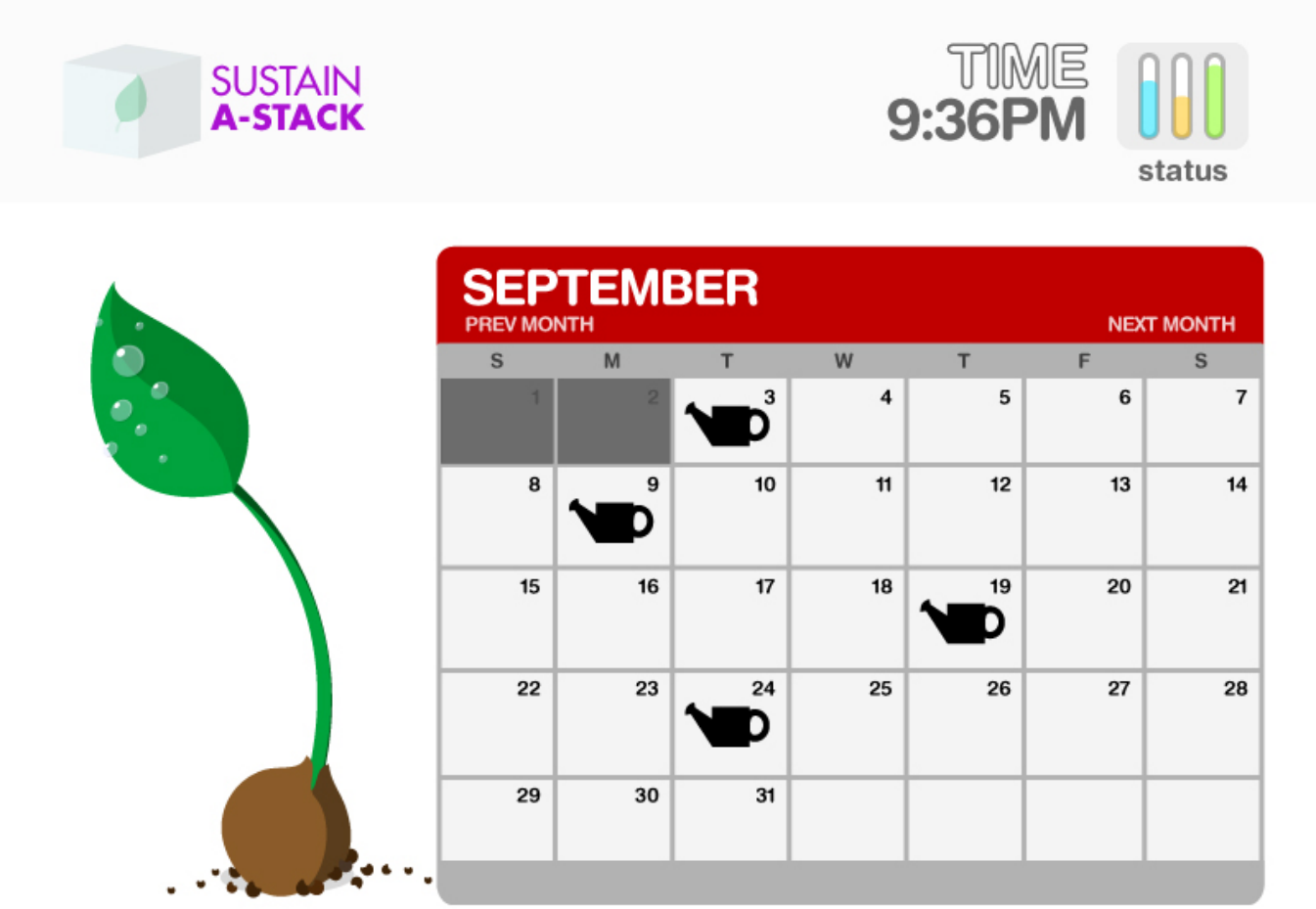
4. FEATURES

- What would you like the product to do for you technology wise?
- Was there anything that was mission or could be added?
- Was there anything you feel was unnecessary?
- What do you imagine it looking like form-wise?
- What materials do you see being used?

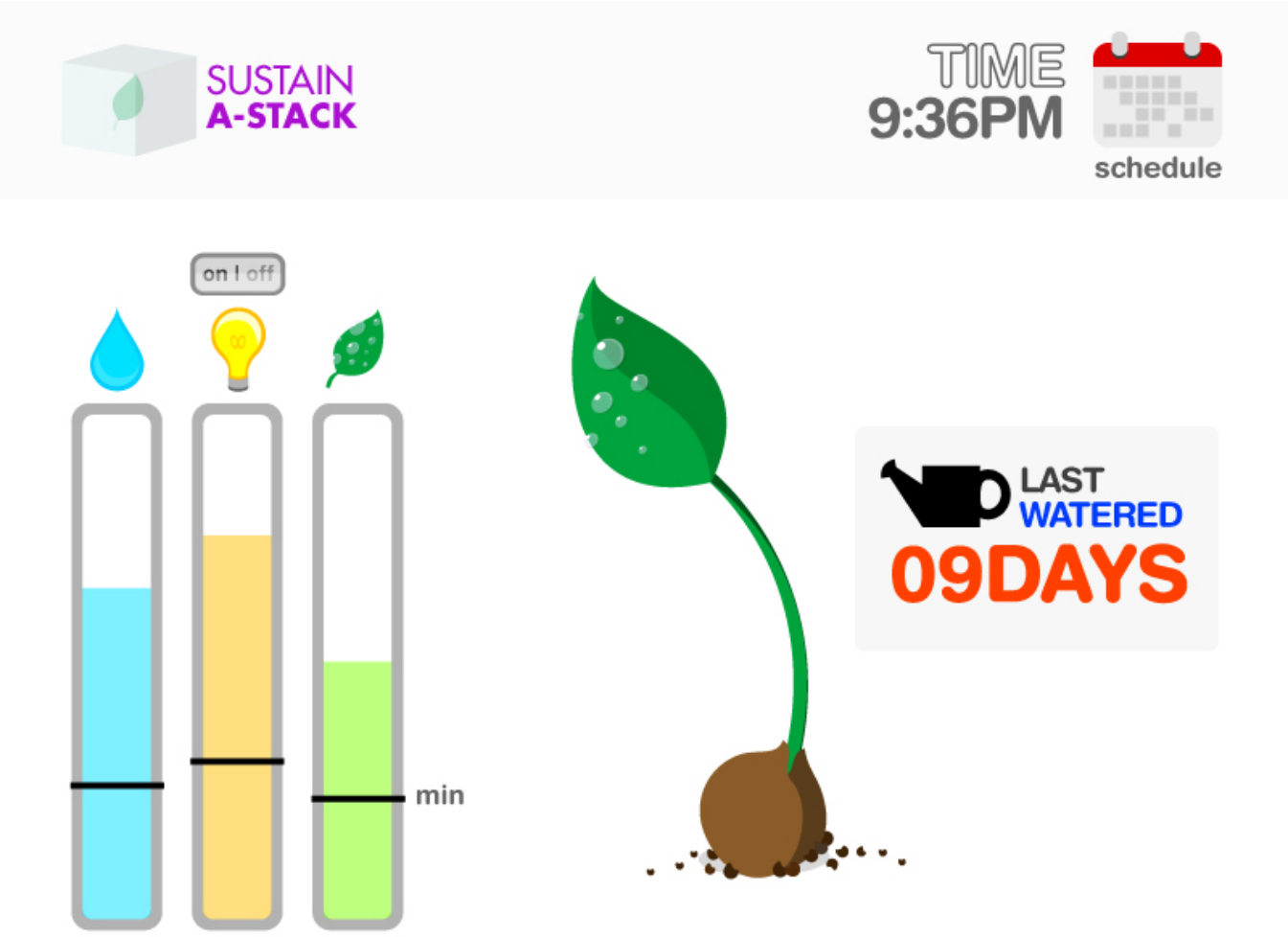
Appendix: Mood Board

Designers use mood or concept boards to convey the overall feel of a project, putting together images and objects which inspire, target desires and facilitate creativity and innovation.

Appendix: Interface Mock Up (Calendar)



Appendix: Interface Mock Up (Status)



Appendix: Personas

PERSONA #1: Audrey Chen

- Female, 25
- Lives in a middle-sized condo with three cats in a Middle-Western Suburb
- Has a degree in Literature
- Employed as a Communications Assistant at a small-scale PR firm
- Enjoys gardening, but has very little room to plant vegetables and herbs
- Rarely uses computers and avoids technology when possible
- Lives for simplicity and small pleasures
- Enjoys cooking with organic foods

PERSONA #2: Lawrence Riley

- Male, 30
- Lives with his wife in an upper class neighbourhood on the West Coast
- Employed as a Regional Manager at an Engineering Firm and is seeking CEO position
- Desires latest technological gadgets
- Collects finely designed European furniture and accessories
- Has a degree in Business Administration
- Grows several small plants in his trendy apartment, but often forgets to water them
- Values affluent lifestyle