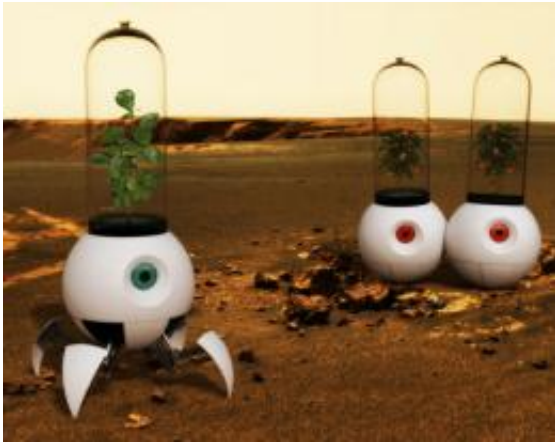


Le Petit Prince -- the Cute Little Gardener Meant for Mars (w/ Video)

September 3 2009, by Lin Edwards



(PhysOrg.com) -- "Le Petit Prince" is a cute one-eyed robot greenhouse designed for use on Mars, and is among the top eight finalists announced last week in the 2009 Electrolux Design Lab competition. The finalists were selected from over 900 entries.

Le Petit Prince (The Little Prince — after the 1943 story by Antoine de Saint Exupery) is a futuristic device that takes care of a single plant and seeks out the best place for it to thrive. It is designed for use during exploration and human colonization of [Mars](#), and consists of a four-legged pod with a glass greenhouse fixed on top. Inside the greenhouse is a single plant growing in hydroponic solution.

The robot can move around with the help of a camera eye, and its [sensors](#) detect heat, light, water, and nutrients, to help it determine the optimal location for its single plant to grow. The robot also communicates with the other robots through wireless technology, to enable them to effectively swap notes and teach each other.

In an interview with Electrolux, the designer of the greenhouse robot, Martin Miklica, a student at the Brno University of Technology in the Czech Republic, said he drew inspiration from many sources, but especially *The Naked Sun* by Isaac Asimov, and R2-D2 from the *Star Wars* movies.

The theme of the Electrolux Lab competition this year is "Designs for the next 90 years". Miklica believes his design is relevant to the theme because over the next four generations, we will have many dreams, but one constant dream is reaching the stars. Mars will be a stepping stone to see if we can live away from Earth. In the future, Miklica believes, we will think of machines as intelligent partners obeying our commands, which may sound sinister, "but it isn't scarier than the first arrival of trains to the cities."



Miklica's design is also intended to be good for morale on silent and desolate Mars, as the [robot](#) is cute enough to be treated as a pet or confidante. It is also a great gardener that will grow any plant you need or want.

When asked what consumer research Miklica had done for his design he admitted it is difficult to do any since it is designed for Mars, but some of his friends said it was cute "and I consider their feedback sufficient."

The winner of the competition will be selected by a team of international designers on September 24 at 100% Design, a leading design and architecture event in London.

[More information: www.electroluxdesignlab.com/20 ... finalists-announced/](http://www.electroluxdesignlab.com/20...finalists-announced/)

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