

RAINFOREST FACTS

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE MOST BIODIVERSE PLACE ON EARTH!

The rainforest today suffers deforestation at the rate of approximately 2.47 acres/second, (that's approximately two US football fields cut down every second!). Why? Because lots of people wrongly think that rainforests are worth more money after they've been cut down than they are worth standing. So rainforests get cut down for lumber, to clear fields for cattle and soy, to build dams and highways, and to extract oil and minerals.

Cutting down the rainforest is a **BIG PROBLEM**, and for a lot of reasons. The rainforest is not just like any other forest (though all forests are important) – the rainforest is extra special! First of all, rainforests are rare and cover less than 7% of the Earth's surface. But scientists estimate that more than **HALF** of the Earth's plant and animal species are endemic to the rainforest, meaning they are naturally found there and nowhere else. These species are important to us for their uniqueness and beauty, and for the role they play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

Also, rainforest plants are special in that many of them have medicinal properties for humans. Scientists are working on testing plants and have found some important cures already, but they have many, many more plants to test. With each species that goes extinct we lose the chance to find out what special properties it might have had – the cure for cancer could be hidden in the genes of rainforest plant we haven't even discovered yet!

Moreover, the trees of the rainforest help filter our air and produce nearly 20% of the entire world's supply of oxygen – cutting down the rainforest affects the environment of the whole world, reducing our supply of clean air and clean water. The trees also store

And not just plants and animals live in the rainforest – in Central and South America nearly 50 million indigenous peoples call the rainforest their home today. Because they depend on the forest for their ways of life, they are the best protectors of the forest. Their lands are often invaded by outsiders – cutting down the forest destroy their homes. Also, their opinions aren't always considered when decisions are made about how the forest should be used, even though they are the people who live in the rainforest.



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HOW YOU CAN HELP

TAKING SMALL ACTIONS EVERY DAY CAN CONSERVE THE RAINFOREST

Now you know how important the rainforest is for us, and you know about the very big trouble the rainforest is in. But you might think – the rainforest is far away, I've never been there, how can I help prevent it from being cut down???

The equation is simple – the more products we want to buy from rainforest land, the more trees that will need to be cut down to supply those products.

So, step one to saving the rainforest: reduce your use of rainforest products as well as products which are produced on cleared rainforest lands – palm oil, timber, soy, beef and leather are the main products which contribute to rainforest destruction. Specifically, consider doing something like eating less beef – just one hamburger can mean the destruction of 55 square feet of rainforest, so try to think of another choice for lunch! Also, try to buy fruit such as oranges that were grown in the United States rather than in Brazil. Talk to your parents about reading labels to avoid products containing palm oil.

More generally you can help the planet by using less energy – things like gasoline and electricity. Walk, bike or take public transportation instead of riding in the car. Talk to your parents about ways to make your home more energy efficient – keep your house a little colder and wear a sweater in the winter, for example!

Another resource it's easy to use less of and that has a very strong connection to forests in the world is paper. Though most paper is not made from rainforest trees, using less paper will mean fewer trees in general must be cut down, and this is still good for the planet. For example, think about the paper towels you use to dry your hands or wipe up a spill, and try to use fewer of them next time... or better yet, try to use none at all! Cloth towels and reusable sponges work just as well for these jobs!

Most importantly – now that you know about the rainforest, spread the word! The more people who are involved in this issue the more successful we can be in saving the rainforest. Tell your friends and family what you've learned, and talk to them about joining you in your efforts to use fewer resources and protect the rainforests.



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