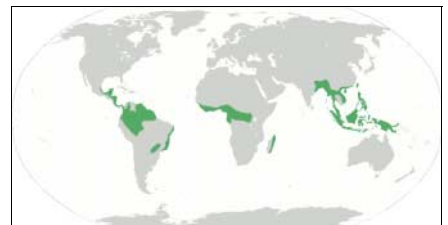


Rainforests

Tropical Rainforests

Tropical rainforests are found near the equator. They occur in places where the weather is warm and humid, enabling the vegetation to grow thick and fast. In these forests rain falls nearly every day throughout the year, with over 200cm of rain falling each year. However, in some rainforests they have much. The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon Rainforest in South America, which has about 280cm of rain each year.



The areas in green mark the world's tropical rainforests.



Temperate Rainforests

Temperate rainforests are found in temperate countries of the world. They occur in eastern North and South America, northeastern Asia, southern Australia and western and central Europe. The difference between summer and winter temperatures in these countries is not too extreme - the summers are not very hot nor are the winters very cold. Yearly rainfall in a temperate rainforest ranges from 75 cm to 150 cm.



The areas in green mark the world's temperate rainforests.

Courtesy of ADWilson www.naturespicsonline.com



Hoh Rainforest, Olympic Peninsula, Washington, USA, is a temperate rainforest.

Rainforest Layers

Emergent Layer: This layer consists of trees that extend beyond the canopy layer. They get the most sunlight and provide a haven for small animals and birds.

Canopy Layer: The top or crown of trees form a 'roof' over the understory and forest floor. Insects, birds, reptiles and mammals live here.

Understorey Layer: This is a dark, cool layer where large-leaved plants are found and which also contains a shrub layer.

Forest Floor: The darkest part of the forest, where little grows due to the lack of light. The largest animals live here and it is full of animal life, especially insects.

Rainforest Facts:

- Rainforests once covered 14% of the earth's surface but now only cover 6%.
- Rainforests are home to over half the world's animals and plants and to native tribal people.
- Rainforests help to absorb the carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere and convert it into clean air for us to breathe.
- A quarter of the world's medicines come from rainforest plants.
- Rainforests are very important for the health of our planet.

