

1. Forest structure

The forest is like a house

It has a floor (ground layer), walls (understorey), curtains and decorations on the walls (climbers and epiphytes) a roof (canopy), and chimneys (emergent trees).



1. Forest structure

- Find an interesting place to stop and observe a range of different forest plants.
- Compare the structure of this area of forest to a house.
- Sketch the structure of this area of forest. Make sure you have included
 - Large trees that form the canopy (roof) of the forest
 - Smaller trees growing under the forest canopy
 - Epiphytes and creepers – the plants that grow on the trees
 - Leaf litter—dead leaves, fallen branches (the recycling department in the forest)
 - The forest floor—the ground area of the forest. It may include lots of small plants (a bit like a nursery).
 - Roots are mostly out of sight but sketch any that you can see.
- Can you see windows in the house?
 - How have they been made (possibly from broken branches or fallen trees)?
 - What role do these windows play in the structure of the forest?
- Share your ideas with your group about the importance of each part of the forest.
 - What is important about each part?
- Suggest what might happen to the forest if:
 - some large canopy trees were removed because people wanted their wood for building;
 - the smaller trees were cleared to provide more space for children to play or people to picnic;
 - the leaf litter was raked up every few days to keep the area looking tidier;
 - roots of plants were damaged by 4-wheel drive vehicles that were allowed into the forest..

Each green leaf is a mini power house. Leaves use energy from the sun to change water and carbon dioxide into plant food and oxygen.

