

Forest Definition

Tick three boxes – yes, it’s a forest!

	No	Yes
Do trees dominate the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are most of the trees taller than two metres in height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do they shade more than 20% of the ground surface?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



This broad definition covers all the world’s different types of forest:

- The giant redwood forests of the Pacific North West of the USA
 - The low-growing subalpine eucalypt forests of Central Tasmania
 - The steamy tropical forests of the Amazon basin
 - The evergreen forests that stretch across vast swathes of the Russian taiga
 - The deciduous broadleaf forests of northern Japan
- And dozens of others!



Geographical dictionaries have a definition for the word ‘forest’ – but it doesn’t scratch the surface of the complex network of living things whose lives intertwine there.

But if all you see are the trees, you’re missing most of the life of a forest.

That’s because a forest is a complex ecosystem – a living web of many species of plants and animals.

From the forest canopy to deep in the soil, forests also provide shelter, food and habitat for thousands of species of animals – birds and mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects and other invertebrates.

Most forests have several layers of plants:

- At the top is the canopy of mature trees
 - Below are the understorey trees, then a layer of shrubs
 - Close to the ground level are herbs and grasses
 - Lying on the forest floor is a layer of litter – fallen leaves, branches and rotting logs
 - In the earth below, probing roots seek water and nutrients
- And that’s just the plant life!

