**What is a forest**?

**A fores**t is a community of trees, shrubs, herbs, and associated plants and organisms that cover a considerable area that use oxygen, water and soil nutrients as the community attains maturity and reproduces itself.

**A forest** is a community of living and non-living things where the predominant (main) species is trees. Everything in a forest is connected. Everything affects everything else.

As a result, the forest is made up of small and large areas of different aged trees, often with a mixture of different species.

A forest with many trees of different ages and types supports a variety of wildlife. Without a variety of trees in the forest the variety of animal life would be greatly decreased.

**Types of Forests**

Forests come in all **shapes** and **sizes**. The many different types of forest are generally classified according to **location** and **climate**.

* **Pure forest**

A forest consists of one species makes up 80% or more of the total number of trees.

* **Mixed forest**

A forest consists of two or more types of trees, with no more than 80% of the most common tree.

**Forest structure**

A forest has a distinct vertical structure. Within a healthy forest, there are recognizable layers of plants, from the soil to the treetops. Each of these layers is composed of one or more dominant types of plants. Five layers that appear in most forests: **the canopy, shrub, herbaceous, litter, and soil layers.**

**Forest canopy**: formed by the branches and leaves from the tallest trees

**Understory:** the middle layer where shorter trees and shrubs grow.

**Forest floor:** is the third layer where trees begin as seedlings. Tree roots also make up this layer that hold onto to soil and organic matter so that grasses, fungi, microorganisms and animals may flourish.

**Parts of a forest**

The living parts of a forest include trees, shrubs, grasses and other herbaceous (non-woody) plants, algae, fungi, insects, mammals, birds, and microorganisms living on the plants and animals and in the soil.

These interact with one another and with the non-living part of the environment - including the soil, water, and minerals, to make up what we know as a forest.

