WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE
TROPICAL BIOMES?

Interesting Facts

Tropical rainforests contain up to 50% of the world's species!

Many medicines come from plants that are found only in tropical forests such as treatments for malaria, Hodgkin's disease and leukemia. These forests also sequester greenhouse gases and provide critical food and habitat for many endangered animals.

Major Tropical Biomes

A biome is an area containing specific dominant plants and associated animal life. Tropical biomes have warm and constant temperatures from month to month. The major limiting growth factor is light availability. Many tropical forests have distinct layers. Plants have many unique adaptations that help them survive the climate and challenges particular to the layer they live in.

Tropical and Subtropical Moist Broadleaf Forests
Characterized by low variability in annual temperature and high levels of rainfall (>200 centimetre annually). Forest composition is dominated by semi-evergreen and evergreen deciduous tree species. These trees number in the thousands and contribute to the highest levels of species diversity in any terrestrial major habitat type. A perpetually warm, wet climate promotes more explosive plant growth than in any other environment on Earth.

Tropical and Subtropical Dry Broadleaf Forests
Though these forests occur in climates that are warm year-round, and may receive several hundred centimeters or rain per year, they deal with long dry seasons which last several months and vary with geographic location. These seasonal droughts have great impact on all living things in the forest.

Tropical and Subtropical Coniferous Forests
These tropical regions experience low levels of precipitation and moderate variability in temperature. They are characterized by diverse species of conifers, whose needles are adapted to deal with the variable climatic conditions. Many migratory birds and butterflies spend winter in tropical and subtropical conifer forests. Mexico harbors the world's richest and most complex subtropical coniferous forests.

Tropical and subtropical grasslands, savannas, and shrublands
Large expanses of land in the tropics do not receive enough rainfall to support extensive tree cover. These areas are characterized by rainfall levels between 90-150 centimetres per year. Grasses dominate the species composition of these regions, although scattered trees may be common.

Mangroves
Mangroves occur in the waterlogged, salty soils of sheltered tropical and subtropical shores. With their distinctive nest of stilt and prop-like roots, mangroves can thrive in areas of soft, waterlogged, and oxygen-poor soil by using aerial and even horizontal roots to gain a foothold. The roots also absorb oxygen from the air, while the tree's leaves can excrete excess salt.