Tropical Forests Absorb Carbon Dioxide

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) serves a crucial role in the world's atmosphere as it holds the warmth from the sun and is essential for plants and trees to grow.

Forests play an important role by absorbing carbon dioxide during photosynthesis, storing carbon, and producing oxygen as a by-product of photosynthesis.

With an increased level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, forests become even more vital by removing CO_2 from the atmosphere to mitigate the effects of climate change on the environment.

The process of absorbing carbon dioxide in forests is called SEQUESTRATION. This means that plants absorb carbon dioxide, retain the carbon and release the oxygen.

Forests in the United States absorb and store about 750 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, an amount equivalent to 10% of the country's annual CO_2 emissions.

Forests fight global warming because they absorb the CO_2 which is responsible for driving changes in the atmosphere.

How much of a forest consists of the carbon? According to the Smithsonian Institute, between 85% and 94% of a tree's dry weight is carbon.

In the tropics it takes about 25 to 30 years for a tree's mass to achieve a gross weight over a ton and a three-quarters. Thus we calculate the amount of carbon sequestration per tree at around a ton and a half after a tree reaches thirty years of age.

The larger a tree becomes, the greater is its rate of CO_2 sequestration per year.

Left: The Guatemalan rainforest in the Peten district. These ancient Mayan pyramids rise up above the forest canopy and add a beauty and mystery to this area.