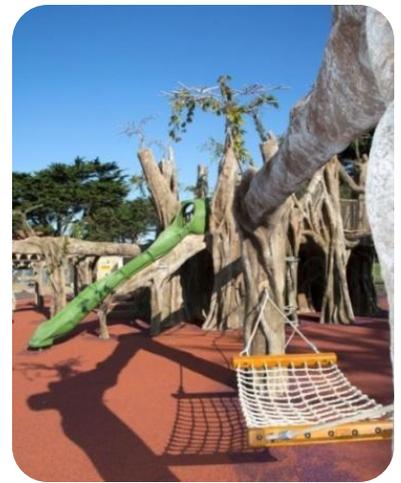




Tropical Banyan Tree Playground Learning Guide



Everyone head for the Banyan Tree!

Geared for 5-12 year olds, this section of the playground provides an excellent backdrop for discussing animal adaptations, acting out animal movements, envisioning food webs, and— of course— for having imaginative free play time. Below, you'll find information about tropical forests and creative ways to explore this special area.

Background

Tropical rainforests are the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world. They only cover ~2% of the earth's surface, but are home to over half of the world's plants and animal species. The banyan, a type of fig tree, is one of the many plants found in tropical rainforests. They produce fruit that feeds many animals in the rainforests; parrots, hornbills, toucans, howler monkeys, gibbons, and bats all use the banyan tree's fruit in some way. Since the nutrient rich top soil is not very deep, trees in the rainforest must adapt in different ways to support their large size. As a result, they grow shallow, widespread roots in order to absorb the most nutrients. As the banyan tree grows, its branches send down 'aerial roots' which then connect to the ground, root themselves and become additional support for the tree.

Words to Learn

Arboreal: living in or often found in trees; mainly traveling along tree branches

Brachiate: to move by using the arms to swing from branch to branch. Siamangs are excellent brachiators.

Canopy: upper level of forest trees

Prehensile: a body part adapted for seizing or grasping, especially by wrapping around (e.g. tails, tongues, digits, etc.).

Act out animal movements!

- Pretend to be different tropical rainforest animals.
- What are some of the different ways that animals move? For example, how does a parrot move differently than a monkey?

Adaptation Activities

- Imagine you're at the top of a tropical forest banyan tree. What do you see below you?
- Now, picture yourself on the forest floor looking up at the banyan. What do you see?
- If you were a predator, where would you want to be in the tree? What if you were a prey animal?

Earth Concern

Deforestation is the cutting, clearing, and removal of rainforests or related ecosystems that leads to loss of habitat for many plants and animal species.

How You Can Help!

You can reduce your own use of natural resources such as wood, electricity, and water. Use both sides of paper when writing or drawing and use products made from recycled paper.

Sculpture Connection!

Look for these animals from the tropics in the Sculpture Learning Plaza!

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|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leafcutter ant | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian flying fox | <input type="checkbox"/> Seahorse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hoatzin | <input type="checkbox"/> Giraffe weevil | <input type="checkbox"/> Horned marsupial frog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burmese python | <input type="checkbox"/> Leatherback sea turtle | <input type="checkbox"/> Centipede |

