

Deforestation

Deforestation is when the Earth's forests are cut down to make room for other things. One reason for cutting down forests is for farmers to have room to grow crops and raise animals. They use the crops and animals to feed their families or to sell to other people. Logging companies cut down trees to make paper and wood products. This is especially a problem in the Earth's rainforests.



Deforestation is good for some people; but it can also be bad. People who live in the rainforest need the forests for food, clothing, and housing. Almost half of the Earth's animals live in rainforests. If the forests get cut down, these animals will lose their homes. In fact, In October 2012, the International Union for Conservation reported that 25 primates (mammals most similar to humans) are much endangered. This is partly because of deforestation. These animals include gorillas and monkeys, and all of them live in rainforests.

The rainforest is also home to 2/3 of all the plant families on the Earth. Some of these plants are very rare. A few are used to make 25% of all our medicines, and this number is growing.

If all the trees are cut down, the animals and plants will lose their homes. Also, the soil will not have anything to hold it, and there will be nowhere for the rain to go. The soil will change to mud, and then begin to move downhill to rivers and the ocean. This can cause floods downriver and dry rivers upland. The remaining soil will not be good for crops, because there will not be any nutrients in it.

Deforestation can also change the climate of the Earth. Without trees giving shade to the forest ground, the ground becomes drier. We need trees to breathe. If too many trees are cut down it can make the air around us hard to breathe. The Earth will warm up too much if there are too many gases in the air. This is known as global warming. Global warming can change the temperature in many animals' habitats around the world. Some animals may not be able to live in the new temperatures and die.

One solution to deforestation is to replant a tree for every tree that is cut down. This is a good start. However if whole forests are cut down, it takes time for the new trees to grow back. Scientists are working with farmers and loggers to come up with better answers.