

Rainforest Diorama Challenge

Helpful Tips

This month, we are challenging you to recreate the *Rainforest* exhibit at home! Use plants, animals, and anything you have on hand along with these helpful tips to recreate the tropical rainforest found on the First Floor of the Museum. Show us your creations through one of our social media channels, or send to communications@mpm.edu and we'll share it!

The Tropical Rainforest

The tropical rainforest is a very dense, hot, and wet forest characterized by high rainfall of 100 inches or more per year. Tropical rainforests can be found all around the globe, close to the equator. There you will find taller trees, lots of vines, ferns, and epiphytes, or plants that grow on other plants. In the tropical rainforest, there are more species of trees, but fewer numbers of each species.

Rainforest Layers

There are four layers in a tropical rainforest, and this is important to capture when creating a diorama, as the Milwaukee Public Museum has done.

Emergent (150 ft or more): This is where the tallest trees are sparsely located in the tropical rainforest. Trees here get plenty of sun and rain and are exposed to high winds.

Canopy (60-100 ft): This is the layer right below the emergent. The vegetation in the canopy is denser, so little light penetrates to the layers below. Lots of vines, ferns, and epiphytes, or plants that grow on other plants, can be found here. Animals like monkeys, sloths, birds, lizards, and others spend most of their lives in this layer.

Most of the action happens here!

Understory (15-30 ft): This is the layer right below the canopy layer. The smaller trees and shrubs that grow here are shaded and do not receive as much rain, but the humidity is high.

Forest Floor: Little sunlight reaches here, so the vegetation is rather sparse and open. The air is hot, humid, and still. There are many decomposers that live on the forest floor, breaking down the leaves and branches from the layers above.

