



MANY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE DEPEND ON FORESTS AND TREES FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD.

Yet, forests can seem harsh and hostile places to those living in or beside them. Sometimes we can feel as if the only way to survive, is to clear the forest, harvest what is there, and use the land to grow food. While this just may help in the short term, we need to think more deeply because forests are effectively the lungs of planet earth - we don't just need them, we depend on them. We need forests, and we need trees.

Trees are fundamentally fantastic

Trees provide humans with shade from the sun, shelter from the rain, warmth from firewood, charcoal and coal, and a feast of food and furnishings - fruit, nuts, chairs, tables, broomsticks, fishing rods and medicine. Trees bind the soil so that other plants can live on the forest floor, they hold water in their branches and they make rain. Masses of different animals live on and inside trees. Woodpeckers snuggle inside their trunks, tree frogs squish under their leaves, bats dangle bottom-up from their branches, spiders spin in their bark. Baobab trees can be 12 metres in diameter. Trees are the oldest things alive. Some trees live for thousands of years.

COMING UP

This chapter shares just some of the things we can do to live well while preserving our forest ecosystems and the life-giving services they provide.

FRUIT MAY BE EATEN BY YOUR GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDCHILDREN, FROM A TREE PLANTED BY YOU!

SAD FACTS

Most of Africa's forests, more than 200 million hectares, are in the Congo Basin, but they are disappearing rapidly. One fifth were lost during the 1980s and another 3.4 million hectares every year between 2000 and 2010. The destruction has slowed down, but more than 600 million cubic metres of wood are cut for timber and fuel every year!

