

Plants from the garden centre

Garden centres are places that sell a huge variety of plants. Many of the ones sold as indoor plants were found in tropical rainforests.

True rainforests are characterised by tall trees forming a more-or-less complete canopy overhead. Smaller plants can survive by climbing to the sunlight using trees as support, or by living entirely in the upper levels of the canopy as epiphytes (orchids and staghorn ferns being typical examples). A few might survive on the forest floor by being able to tolerate very low light levels.

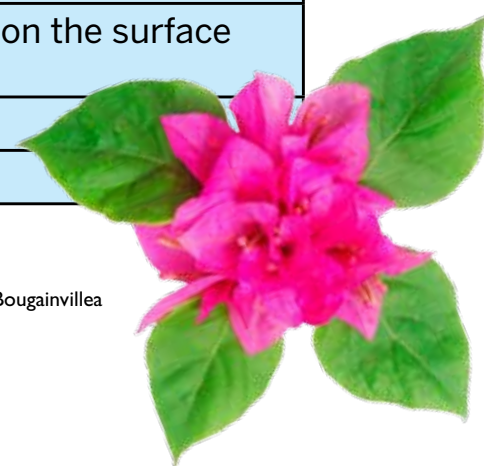
Most real rainforest trees are much too large for the average house, of course, but a rainforest effect can be created with a selection of appropriate species. Tree ferns and palms are particular favourites in the home.

Here are some plants that are usually cheap to buy, grow in rainforests, and that you can find and put together in a corner of a classroom or at home.

See if you can visit a rainforest and spot these:

Bamboo	Tall thin rods (for example, Bengal bamboo)
Rubber plant	Rich, deep green broad leaves
Cheese plant	A climber
Palm	
Bromeliad	See activity 8
Orchid	Tropical ones that grow without roots – ask the garden centre
Bougainvillea	Lots of bright flowers
Curare	A vine with light green leaves and dark veins. This vine makes some of the long hanging ‘ropes’ or lianes in a rainforest.
Coconut	Usually grown with the nut on the surface of the soil
African violets	
Spider plant	See activity 7

Bougainvillea



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So many tropical rainforest plants have been cultivated for home use that people often do not know they are rainforest plants at all.

If you have room, you can collect a few of these plants because some of them are among the cheapest plants you can buy.

By placing them carefully, you can get children to think about variety in rainforests.

