

Sun and shade in the rainforest



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FACT SHEET 5

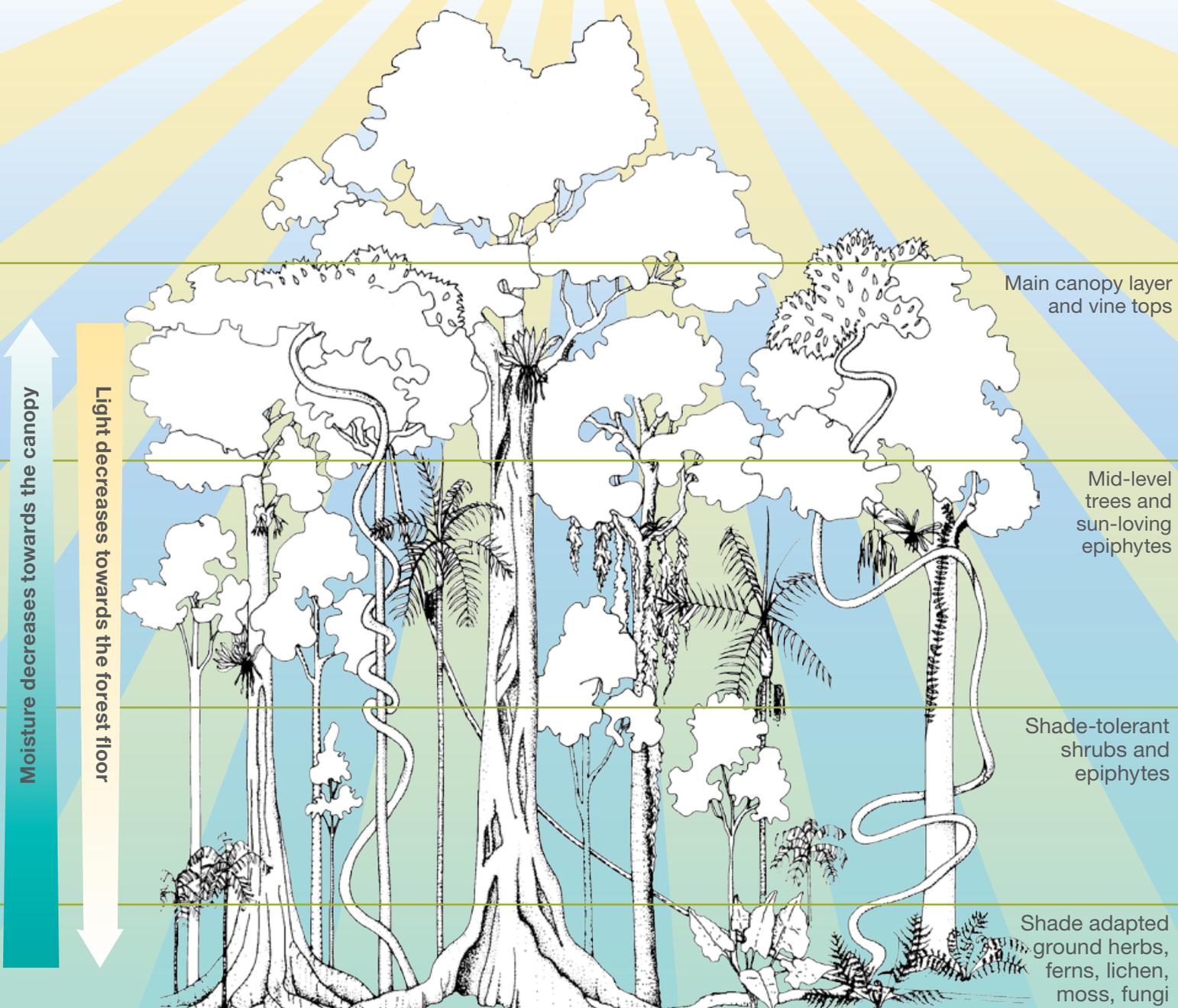
Plants of rainforests display special features and are located in special places within the forest in response to the vertical distribution of humidity and sunlight.

Plants occupy various niches and have adaptations to ensure adequate supply of essential elements.

All life uses energy from the sun

Because of abundant water in the soil and air, rainforests contain more life than other ecosystems. This is why they are so special.

Australian rainforests contain a greater diversity of plant life than other Australian ecosystems.



Rainforest plant preferences



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FACT SHEET 6

COLOUR IN the rainforest. **CUT OUT** the pictures and stick them on the rainforest, placing each plant where it grows best in the rainforest.



Lemon aspen

A tree of the main canopy, which bears pale cream acidic fruit.



Birdsnest ferns

Epiphytes which grow best attached high up tree trunks where they catch plenty of sun and falling leaves.



Bangalow palm

A palm of the mid-level layer which has graceful fronds. It thrives in moist areas where sunlight is patchy.



Beech orchid

An epiphyte of upper branches where sunlight is available but the canopy gives some protection from drying out.



Cunjevoi

A ground herb plant with very large leaves designed to make the most of the small, shifting patches of sunlight on the forest floor.



Ground fern and moss

Both these plants love moist, shaded places, especially near water.



Fungi

These plants obtain nutrient from rotting wood and therefore grow on fallen logs and dead tree trunks.



Fungi

Fungi do not use the sun to produce their food, but do best where there is plenty of moisture, so can live in very shady places.



Lawyer palm

This very prickly climber scrambles through the mid levels, using other plants as props in its climb towards sunlit zones.



Lichen

Fungi in a working relationship with algae, these interesting, hardy plants grow on tree trunks and limbs throughout all levels of the forest, as well as on rocks.



Moss

Moss grows on tree bark, old logs and rocks in the lowest levels of the forest, where moisture levels are high, and sunlight is limited.



Pothos

One of the common climbers attached to tree trunks, it grows from the ground up to sunnier levels above the shrub layer.



Wonga vine flowers

Wonga vines grow strongly, twining around other plants, to send their stems up to the very top of the main canopy, where they flower in the bright sunlight.



Strangler fig

These figs germinate in tree clefts in the upper layers, sending their roots down to the ground. Their branches emerge above the main canopy.



Treefern

Treeferns love the moister, shady mid-level of the rainforest, where sun strikes them only through a hole in the canopy.



Walkingstick palm

This small palm has a stem only as thick as a walkingstick, and it grows in the low shrub layer in heavy shade.



Wonga vine stem

Large, rope-like vines grow up from the ground and hang from tree limbs in the under layers of the forest. Their leaves are hidden high up above.