

Vocabulary Chapter 22 Biomes Around the World

climate

The summary of weather patterns over time

Example: Hawaii has a warm tropical climate.

ecosystem

A living (biotic) community of organisms in association with the nonliving parts (abiotic)

Example: The riparian ecosystem is found along watercourses.

biomass

The total amount of organic matter in a particular habitat

Example: The biomass of the rain forest is much greater than the biomass of the desert.

abiotic

Refers to non-living parts of an ecosystem

Example: Rocks are abiotic.

leeward

The downwind side of a mountain or other obstruction

Example: The forest was much different on the leeward side of the mountain.

climatogram

A graph of temperature and precipitation measurements

Example: The climatogram of the rain forest was much different from the climatogram of the desert.

precipitation

Rain, snow, sleet, or any combination of moisture falling from the sky

Example: The precipitation this year was way below normal.

ecologist

A scientist who studies ecosystems

Example: We have a resident ecologist at our park.

alpine tundra

A biome found in the high mountain regions above the timberline

Example: Mt Whitney in California has small patches of alpine tundra.

arctic tundra

A biome covering vast reaches of the north characterized by stunted plants and permafrost

Example: The Alaska Wildlife Refuge consists of vast areas of arctic tundra.

taiga

A biome of the far north consisting of vast reaches of coniferous forests

Example: The taiga is also known as the boreal forest.

temperate

Referring to the mid-latitude areas of the earth in which there are four distinct seasons

Example: The trees of the temperate forest of the United States experience a beautiful fall color display.

deciduous

Refers to those plants which drop their leaves every winter

Example: Maple trees are deciduous.

canopy

Refers to the top part of a forest

Example: The canopy of the tropical rain forest is rich in life.

consumers

Animals that eat plants

Examples: Rabbits, mice, and grasshoppers are all consumers.

epiphyte

A plant that lives by attaching itself to other plants, but receives its nutrients primarily from the air

Example: My orchids are epiphytes.

prairie

A vast area of grassland

Example: Kansas used to be primarily a prairie.

pampas

A grassland found in South America

Example: The pampas covers vast areas of Argentina.

cloudburst

A powerful thunderstorm in which great amounts of rain fall quickly

Example: The cloudburst created a flash flood in the arroyo.

taproot

A type of long central root that often reaches deep into the soil in search of water

Example: The carrot is a fleshy taproot.

cuticle

A waxy outer covering of plants

Example: The cuticle keeps the chaparral plants from drying out.

estivation

A type of "summer hibernation"

Example: Kangaroo rats undergo estivation in their cool burrows during the hot months of summer.

savanna

A grassland biome consisting of widely scattered trees

Example: The lions lounged under the trees in the African savanna

monsoon

A period of prolonged rainfall

Example: The monsoons caused much flooding in India.

chaparral

A scrubland biome consisting of densely packed brush

Example: The chaparral of California is subject to frequent and intense wildfires.

ground zero

The center of a nuclear blast

Example: At ground zero in the Nevada desert, all life was obliterated.

succession

The replacement of one plant community by another over time.

Example: The pond gradually became filled and became a swamp and then a meadow in the long process of succession.

climax community

The final rather stable stage of succession

Example: The ancient redwood forest is a climax community.

bioequilibrium

A stage in an ecosystem in which life is rather stable

Example: The climax forest was at bioequilibrium.

vincristine

A cancer-fighting drug produced from a plant found in the tropical rain forest

Example: Vincristine is an example of the value of the tropical rain forest.

desertification

A process in which grasslands and savannas turn into deserts through human activities

Example: Desertification is reducing the productivity of many parts of Africa.

overgrazing

The condition brought about by allowing too many animals to consume the plants in their immediate environment

Example: Overgrazing can result in erosion and toxic weed growth.

acid rain

A condition brought about when rain mixes with toxic emissions from power plants and other sulfur producing sources

Example: Acid rain in the United States has caused many lakes in New York state to become sterile.