

GROUP ACTIVITY: LIVING IN THE UNDERSTOREY

In your groups, explore the Understorey and pick two labelled plants that interest you. Sketch or take photographs of the plants and their plant parts. Design a pocket guide/ powerpoint presentation/ online blog to teach visitors about the plants living in the understorey. Conduct further research on the plants online / at the library and use the following table to help you plan your work.

	Plant 1	Plant 2
Scientific Name		
Common Name		
Family		
Origin		
Short write-up on its adaptations or other interesting facts (e.g. colour and shape of leaves / flowers / fruits, pollination / dispersal method, uses of plant, etc.)		

Name: _____

Understorey



Lower Secondary Activity Sheet

ACTIVITY 1: LIVING IN THE SHADE

Proceed to the Understorey (World of Plants) that contains plants that are naturally found in this particular layer of a tropical rainforest. The understorey, together with the forest floor are areas under the dense canopy of larger trees in the rainforest. There are usually few plants living in the understorey and even fewer found on the forest floor.

(a) What do you think are the problems faced by plants living in the understorey?

(b) The plants found in this layer are often "shade-tolerant" and popular as house plants. They have certain characteristics that help them adapt to the layer they are found in so that they may survive better. Find out more about the following plants and describe their adaptive traits in the table provided.

(Hint: Look for the panels at the Understorey and read about the adaptations of these plants)

Problem	Plant	Adaptive Traits
Lack of sunlight	Peacock Fern <i>(Selaginella uncinata)</i>	

Problem	Plant	Adaptive Traits
Competition for nutrients	Leaf-litter Plant <i>(Agrostistachys borneensis)</i>	
Predators from the forest floor	Swiss Cheese Plant <i>(Monstera adansonii)</i>	

ACTIVITY 2: RECYCLING NUTRIENTS

(a) There are many fungi such as mushrooms found on the forest floor. Do you think mushrooms are plants? Explain your answer and describe how they obtain energy in that particular layer of the tropical rainforest.

(b) Enter the "mushroom" hut and observe the underside of its roof. Identify and list the organisms featured there.

(c) Together with fungi, the organisms identified in (b) exist in large concentrations on the forest floor and play an important role as decomposers in a food web.

Explain how nutrients are recycled within the environment by the organisms identified in (b).