



Our Historic Woodlands



Name. _____

There are two types of tree, deciduous and evergreen. Broad-leaved trees, such as oak and birch, fall mainly into the deciduous category because their leaves fall off every autumn. As their name suggests, coniferous trees, such as pine and fir, produce cones. Their leaves are needle shaped. In most cases, these leaves fall off in small numbers all year round, meaning that the trees always remain green. Because of this, these trees are sometimes known as 'evergreens'.

A coniferous forest is usually very dark and dense. Very few plants grow on the forest floor because of the thick layer of needles and also the lack of light. Woodlands with broadleaved trees tend to be more light and open. As a result, they have more flowers in the spring and also attract many more animals. However, even these woodlands can become very shady when all the leaves are on the trees in the summer, so the plants of the woodland floor, such as bluebells, usually grow and flower early in the spring, before the trees' leaves have blocked out most of the light.

Woodlands are home to many plants and animals. The trees offer this wildlife protection from disturbance, predators and bad weather. Fallen leaves and twigs rot down to make an ingredient of soil called humus on which plants can grow.

Trees change carbon dioxide in the air into oxygen, unlike humans and other animals that turn the air's oxygen into carbon dioxide. This is why trees play such an important balancing role on the earth, and is just one of the many reasons why we must protect our woodlands. Chopping down trees, without allowing others to grow, leaves too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This is very bad for our planet because it acts as a 'blanket' around the earth and increases the temperature. This is called the 'greenhouse effect'.

Tree roots also help to hold the soil in place. If woodlands are cut down and the land cleared, the soil can become loose and dry, leading to erosion.

Many of South Yorkshire's woodlands are 'ancient woodlands' meaning that they have existed for at least the last 400 years. A few of these have always been woodland and so they are a direct link with the original 'wildwood'. This does not mean however that the trees in the woodland are also 400 years old. Most are much younger than this. All of our local woods have been managed in the past to provide important materials such as timber, bark and charcoal for local industries. This is one of the important reasons that the iron and steel industries developed in South Yorkshire.

Use the writing above to help you answer these questions

- 1) What is a deciduous tree? Give two examples of deciduous trees.
- 2) What shape are the leaves of coniferous trees?
- 3) Why are most coniferous trees known as 'evergreens'?
- 4) From what things do woodlands protect wildlife?
- 5) Why do very few plants grow on the ground of a coniferous forest?
- 6) What is the name of the soil ingredient made from rotted leaves and twigs?
- 7) What gas do trees turn carbon dioxide into?
- 8) What do we mean by the term 'ancient woodland'?