



Vocabulary: Forest Ecosystem



Vocabulary

- **Consumer** – an *organism* that feeds on organic matter because it cannot produce it.
 - All animals, all fungi, and some plants are consumers.
 - A cow chewing grass, a man eating a steak, earthworms digesting manure, and mold growing on bread all represent consumers in action because in each case the organism is consuming organic matter.
- **Decomposer** – an organism that absorbs nutrients from living things or the organic matter they leave behind, turning it into simpler inorganic matter.
 - Decomposers do not need to kill to get their food.
 - All decomposers are technically consumers as well, but often they are spoken of as separate categories.
 - Most decomposers are bacteria or fungi.
- **Inorganic** – not produced by living things.
 - Inorganic matter is usually less complex in structure than organic matter.
 - Water, oxygen, ammonia, gold, iron, and carbon dioxide are all examples of inorganic matter.
- **Organic** – produced almost exclusively by living (or once-living) things.
 - All organic matter contains carbon.
 - Sugar, protein, and fat are all examples of organic matter.
- **Organism** – a single living thing.
 - An organism may be an animal, a plant, a fungus, or another life form.
- **Population** – all the organisms of a certain kind in a particular place.
- **Producer** – an organism that converts simple inorganic matter (such as water and carbon dioxide) into organic matter (like sugar and protein).
 - Most plants use photosynthesis to create organic material from carbon dioxide in the air.
 - No sunlight reaches the ocean floor, but some bacteria can use energy from hot water to produce organic material. These producers support entire ecosystems miles below the surface.