



Natural Vegetation of the United States and Canada

Grey	Tundra
Dark Green	Coniferous Forest
Medium Green	Deciduous & Coniferous Forest
Light Green	Temperate Grasslands
Yellow	Desert scrub
Light Yellow	Mediterranean Forest
Pink	Everglades

Natural Vegetation: U.S. and Canada

This map shows natural vegetation of the United States and Canada. Natural vegetation is plants that grow without interference from human beings. For example, forests consisting of trees that have grown naturally (and not been planted by people) are natural vegetation. But groves of orange trees are not considered natural vegetation, because those trees were planted by human beings and they also are dependent on human beings for their continued survival. This map shows large regions, covering hundreds of square miles, which are each dominated by specific associations of plants. Each of the major global biomes or large-scale ecosystems (forests, grasslands, savanna, tundra, and desert), are found in the United States or Canada. However, the natural vegetation of large portions of these regions has been replaced by cultivated plants, homes, highways, and other forms of human activity. Deciduous and coniferous forests are the prime forests of the United States and Canada. Coniferous forests are found in the northern latitudes and in the higher altitudes where temperatures are cool and precipitation is relatively small. They also grow in the southern United States, largely on sandy soils. Mixed deciduous and coniferous forests are the dominant vegetation in the eastern third of the United States, extending northward into southern Canada and also westward into the northern central United States and neighboring parts of Canada. The Coast Ranges of California are home to Mediterranean vegetation. Grasslands dominate the interiors of the two countries. The tall grasslands densely covering the surface are called prairies. Steppe grasslands in the Americas are composed of shorter grasses, which do not cover the soil so completely. The grasslands of the United States and Canada are important farming and cattle raising regions. Desert vegetation occurs in warm areas where rainfall is scarce, less than 10 inches on average per year. It is found in the southwestern United States, but not in Canada (because the summer temperatures there are not so high). In contrast, tundra vegetation grows where temperatures are very cold. Its extent over large parts of Canada and parts of Alaska is shown on the map. Although not indicated on this map, tundra vegetation is also found at high altitudes of the mountains. One special type of vegetation are the Everglades of Florida. Characterized as a subtype of the savanna biome, large parts have been modified and removed to make room for people and economic activities in Florida. The Everglades serve as a test case for how the United States will deal with competing demands on valuable vegetative and water resources.

Using the map and your knowledge of Geography, answer the following questions:

WorldView Software: World Geography

MAP: Question 1

What does this map show?

Question 2

What biomes exist in the United States and Canada?

Question 3

What types of forest grow in the United States and Canada? What kinds of forest do not grow in the two countries?

Question 4

What type(s) of vegetation dominate in the northeastern United States? Southwestern United States? Southeastern United States? Does the natural vegetation still grow undisturbed in those regions?

Question 5

What are the Everglades? How have human beings changed their natural characteristics?

Question 6

Why does California support Mediterranean vegetation?

Question 7

Where are grasslands located on this map? Why are they important?