Stop 341 Adult Tour – Layers of the Rainforest, Palm House

The rainforest is made up of four tiers. The very tallest trees are the emergents, sticking out above the canopy layer below. Many hardwood trees have evolved with tall straight trunks to insure the most direct route to the light. Tropical soils are not as deep as our soils here and to provide support many trees have buttressed roots or aerial roots that grow downwards also providing additional support once they anchor in the ground.

Under the emergents is the canopy layer, which forms a big umbrella of dense foliage - almost 90% of the sunlight is absorbed at this level. That’s why many plants in the third layer – the understory – have such large leaf surfaces, as they compete for what little light filters through. If you take the stone walkway into the center bed, you’ll get a look at some of the plants that inhabit the bottom layer– the forest floor. These plants include many commonly grown house plants, since they are well adapted to low light levels. Take a break on the bench and immerse yourself in our ‘jungle room!’ Listen closely, you may also hear some sounds of the tropical rainforest.