

Amazon rainforest grows best in dry season

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University of Arizona scientists say they've made a surprising discovery: the undisturbed Amazon rainforest grows best during the dry season

"Most of the vegetation around the world follows a general pattern in which plants get green and lush during the rainy season and then during the dry season, leaves fall because there's not enough water in the soil to support plant growth," said lead researcher Alfredo Huete of The University of Arizona-Tucson.

"What we found for a large section of the Amazon is the opposite," said Huete. "As soon as the rains stop and you start to enter a dry period, the Amazon becomes alive. New leaves spring out, there's a flush of green growth and the greening continues as the dry season progresses."

Huete, a professor of soil, water and environmental science, says the finding holds true only for the undisturbed portion of the rainforest. Areas in which the primary forest has been converted to other uses or disturbed, "brown down" during the dry season.

The study appears in the March 22 issue of Geophysical Research Letters.

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