

Environmental scientists explain why so many tree species going extinct is so bad for the planet

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Tree species provide multiple direct and indirect values to people, including economic and livelihood values, ecological values and cultural and aesthetic values. Credit: *PLANTS, PEOPLE, PLANET* (2022). DOI: 10.1002/ppp3.10314

A team of environmental scientists has written a follow-up paper to their study published last year that warned that approximately one-third of tree species around the world are in danger of extinction. In this new paper, published in the journal *Plants, People, Planet*, the group explains why the loss of so many tree species is so devastating and why attempts should be made to reverse such extinctions.

Last year, the researchers published what they called the State of the World's Trees report, which detailed the 17,500 tree species that they found were in [danger of extinction](#)—a number that they also note represents approximately a third of all tree species. This time around, the same team has published a paper explaining why the loss of so many tree species in the years ahead could be a big problem.

The biggest problem, they note, is that loss of tree diversity makes life difficult for the tree species that remain. Forests grow smaller and become more susceptible to pests. And smaller and weaker forests mean less carbon sequestration, which means more carbon in the atmosphere warming the planet. It also leaves less [forest](#) available for use as a resource. Trees are sources of wood and [paper products](#) and are the biggest provider of fruits.

Forty-five other scientists from 20 countries are backing their report. It also has the backing of the Botanic Gardens Conservation International and the Global Tree Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's species survival commission.

The researchers note that in addition to the dangers to the planet posed by loss of tree diversity, such losses would also harm many people directly. There are billions of people around the world who rely on forests for their livelihood. Loss of tree diversity, they note, would also adversely impact wildlife that make forests their home.

The researchers conclude that approximately 100 [tree species](#) have already gone extinct. They strongly suggest that leaders around the world and those who support them begin initiatives to preserve the [diversity](#) of the world's forests.

More information: Malin Rivers et al, Scientists' warning to humanity on tree extinctions, *PLANTS, PEOPLE, PLANET* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/ppp3.10314](#)

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