



R

ainforest

B

biome

Introduction:

unfold Me!



The waterfall at the Eden Project was a spectacular sight and used 100% recycled water



unfold Me!

Sophie's Pick #1

Cacao

Growing in the centre of the rainforest biome were cacao trees. The large pods of the tree are used to make a common, tasty treat ... chocolate!



Cacao is the source of chocolate + ex-currency



Did You Know?

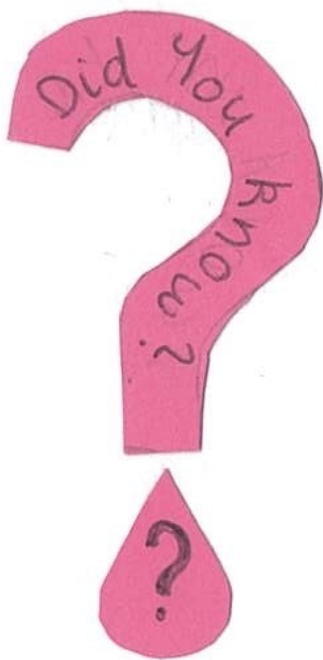
- Cacao pods can grow up to 30cm in size
- The white flesh of cacao beans is called mucilage and is sweet in taste. It is eaten by birds, monkeys and humans
- Cacao trees were originally from rainforests in South America
- The larger leaves of a cacao tree can move up to 90° in order to protect younger leaves from the bright sunlight

My thoughts

I really enjoyed seeing the cacao trees because it was fascinating to see just how large the pods were and the source chocolate originates from. It was also interesting to see how the pods grew from the trunk of the tree rather than further out.

Miracle Berries

These fruit were not yet in season when we visited, so the plant wouldn't have stood out had it not been for the sign - but miracle berries have the unique property to turn sour to sweet



- The thing that makes sour foods turn sweet is called miraculin, found in the flesh of the berries, and it binds to the taste buds, blocking the receptors that make things taste sour
- "Miracleberry" is also the name of two other plant species that similarly affect sweetness of foods

Miracle berries are a fascinating fruit, and one that I have tried before. The effect is very odd, and I am currently researching more about how it works.

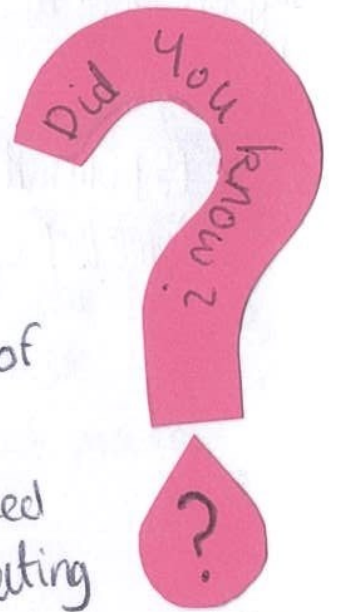
Pineapple

Near the end of our tour of the Rainforest Biome, we found the pineapple plants. Pineapples grow straight from the ground, with one per plant. They are native to South America.



- Wild pineapple plants can survive for up to 50 years.
- Pineapples are actually a combination of 100-200 smaller berries.
- They have many uses, from livestock feed

to tenderising meat and treating inflammation - even the leaves can be made into cloth and rope.



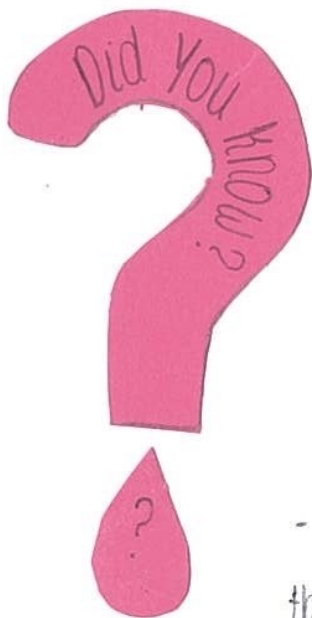
My thoughts

I thought it was interesting seeing how they grow straight from the ground, like shrubs. It was also fascinating to discover the variety of usages - even medical applications!

Sophie's Pick #3

Jade Vine

Growing amidst many other beautiful plants in the biome is perhaps the most spectacular of them all, with bright turquoise leaves that become luminous at night. The Jade vine!



- The bright colour of the jade vine attracts bats at twilight when the flowers become luminous.

- The only place Jade vines grow naturally are in the rainforests of the Philippines

- When it is pollinated, the jade vine grows fruit that can grow to the size of a melon

- The vines can grow to be up to 100 cm long in its natural environment



My thoughts

It was really exciting seeing the Jade vine because not only does it not grow in England but it is also rare to see in its natural habitat. It was not in flower whilst we were there which was slightly disappointing but it was interesting to see how it blended into the background without its bright turquoise flowers. It is also incredible to know how such thin vines can hold such large fruit (when pollinated!)

Mysore Clock Vine

Sophie's Pick #5

Among the green of the biome was a fairy tale like scene with gorgeous flowers of yellow of red and yellow hanging down around you.

The Mysore clock vine!

- The Mysore clock vine got its name because the plant continuously grows in a clockwise spiral
- The Mysore clock vine is used in India to treat jaundice and liver disease
- The plant is pollinated by hummingbirds and songbirds when they come to feed on the nectar



My thoughts



This was my favourite plant in the Rainforest Biome and I loved how it hung down around you and the magical feeling it brought to the surroundings (which already felt surreal!). I also loved just how delicate and beautiful each of the flowers were as well as the richness of their colour.