

Historical Patterns - Succession of a Forest

The forests of the world are never static, but are always changing in their composition and location. By seed dispersal and other propagation techniques, e.g. suckers or runners, trees are able to colonize new locations. As one species establishes itself, the ecosystem of the area changes, i.e. more shade is produced, water tables drop, soil erosion stabilizes, or watershed pathways may change.

Each species of tree has its own growth cycle. In many areas where forests are becoming established, such species such aspen, poplar, birch, and jack pine appear first. The deciduous trees have a shorter lifespan and are therefore, eventually replaced by pine, spruce, and fir, which are able to grow in shade and live longer. Eventually a stable climax forest will become established which will persist as long as there are no dramatic changes in climate or natural disasters that could destroy the forest. The climax forest in Northern Alberta is the boreal forest in which the dominant trees are white or black spruce. One natural element that tends to destroy our boreal forests is fire.

A **cultivated tree** is a tree that did not grow naturally in the area. Although these trees were brought from other places, they adapted to the new region and began to thrive. t of the many cultivated trees are elm and crab apple trees.

