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SAMPLE

The Forest under the Sea

In California, there is a forest where otters sleep in the tops of the trees.

The otters are sea otters, and the trees are tall plants of seaweed called kelp, an underwater plant that grows in the cool, sunlit waters off the coast. At night, the otters wrap themselves in the kelp and sleep in the swaying water.



Kelp forests exist in oceans throughout the world. The kelp can grow 2 feet (60 centimeters) in one day, and a large kelp plant can grow to the height of a 20-story building!

Trees on the land have hard trunks and spreading roots, but these underwater kelp giants don't have root systems. They have finger-like anchors that grip the rocks on the seafloor, called holdfasts.



← A holdfast - kelp gripping rocks on the seafloor



● **Fast Fact** ●

Kelp forests are the perfect place for gray whales to take cover from killer whales.

Land trees get their food from the ground. Their roots suck up **nutrients** and water from the soil. Sap rises from their roots and travels up to the flowers and fruit and leaves. Kelp doesn't feed itself this way, though. It gets its food by swaying through the water and picking up tiny **living organisms** that float by.

Many kinds of small sea creatures such as snails, rockfish, anchovies, and herrings live in the kelp. The underwater forest is their **habitat**. They hide in the thick kelp and holdfasts from **predators** such as seals, dolphins, and sea lions. In turn, these bigger creatures hide from sharks and killer whales. The strange-looking dugong, or sea cow, can usually be found there hiding from sharks, too.

Tiny shellfish such as blue-rayed limpets chew kelp for food. Colorful sea **anemones** [uh-NEM-uh-nees] are underwater plants that are low to the ground. They live on rocks in the kelp forest and use their stinging tentacles to capture shrimp.

