

# Redwood Giants

Read to learn about America's biggest trees.

<sup>1</sup> From a seed that is smaller than a pea grows the tallest of trees. The coast redwood is the unchallenged giant of North America's trees.

## What's special about redwoods?

<sup>2</sup> Redwoods are special for a couple of reasons. The first is their size. Imagine standing next to a tree that is the height of a 20- or 30-story building. The second is their age. Redwoods commonly make it to 600 years or so. Some have been found that are more than 2,000 years old.

## Where do redwoods grow?

<sup>3</sup> To find a coast redwood, you'll have to go to Oregon or California. A strip of coastline about 450 miles long and up to 35 miles wide is home to the redwoods. Coast redwoods do not grow anywhere else in the world.

## Why do redwoods grow there?

<sup>4</sup> The coast of the Pacific Ocean provides a special environment for the redwoods. Cool, moist air comes off the ocean and keeps the trees moist all year. That is important because almost all of the area's rain falls between October and May. During the dry summer months, the trees depend on moisture from the thick fog that often hangs over the coast.

## How do redwoods survive?

<sup>5</sup> Redwoods have a couple of built-in protection systems. Most of a redwood's branches and leaves are high up on the tree. This keeps them safe from forest fires. Also, the bark of a mature redwood tree is as much as 12 inches thick. The thick covering protects the lower part of the tree from fire damage. Redwoods are safe from insect damage because the wood contains a bitter-tasting chemical called *tannin*.

## What should I do?

<sup>6</sup> If you ever get a chance, visit a redwood forest. Look among the tree trunks and imagine who might have camped there a thousand years ago. Look upward and just imagine how high the trees might grow if we preserve and protect them.

