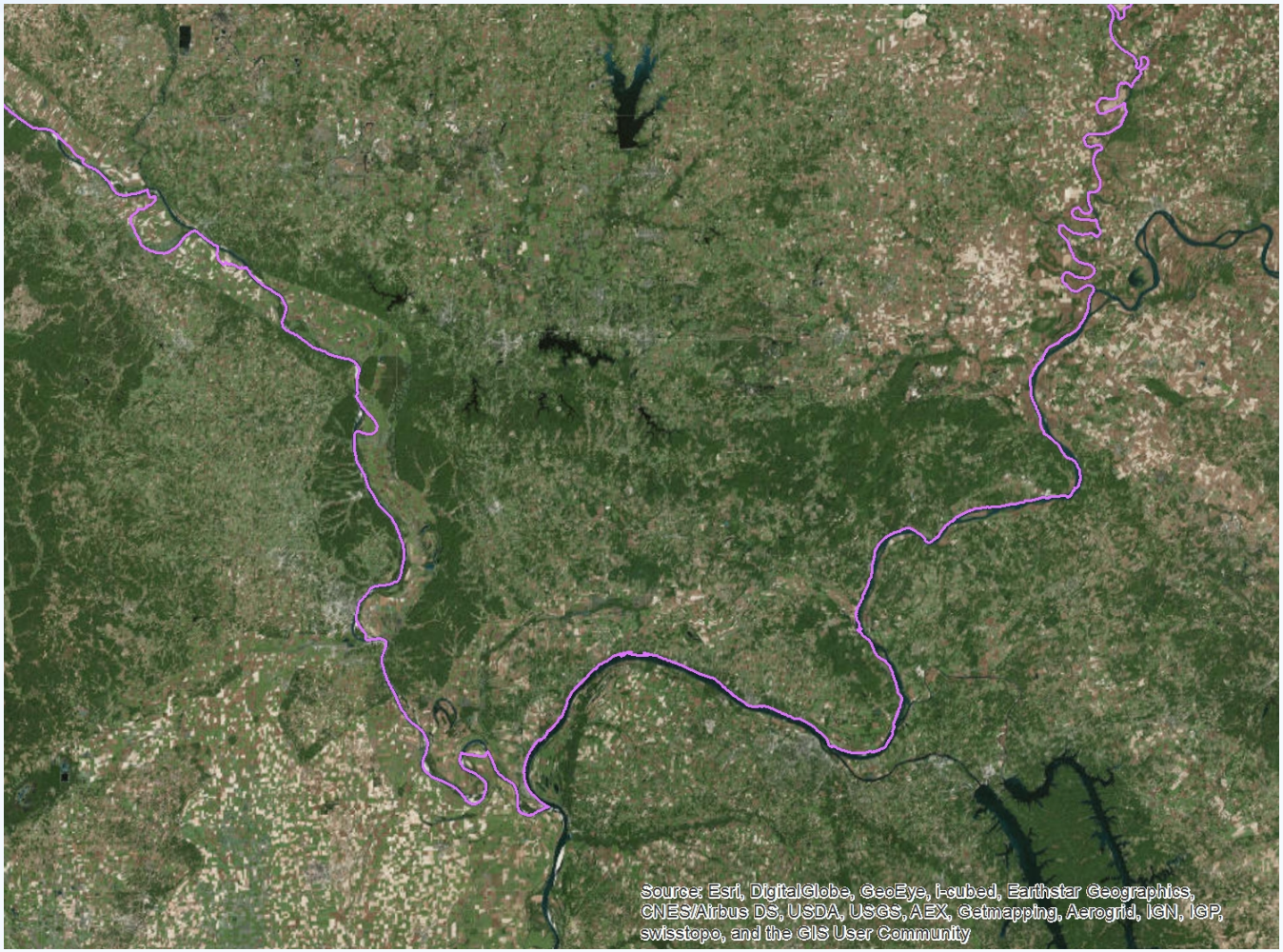
The Push to Save Southern Illinois' Forests

Let the Sun Shine In

Tracy Fidler

Save our forests?

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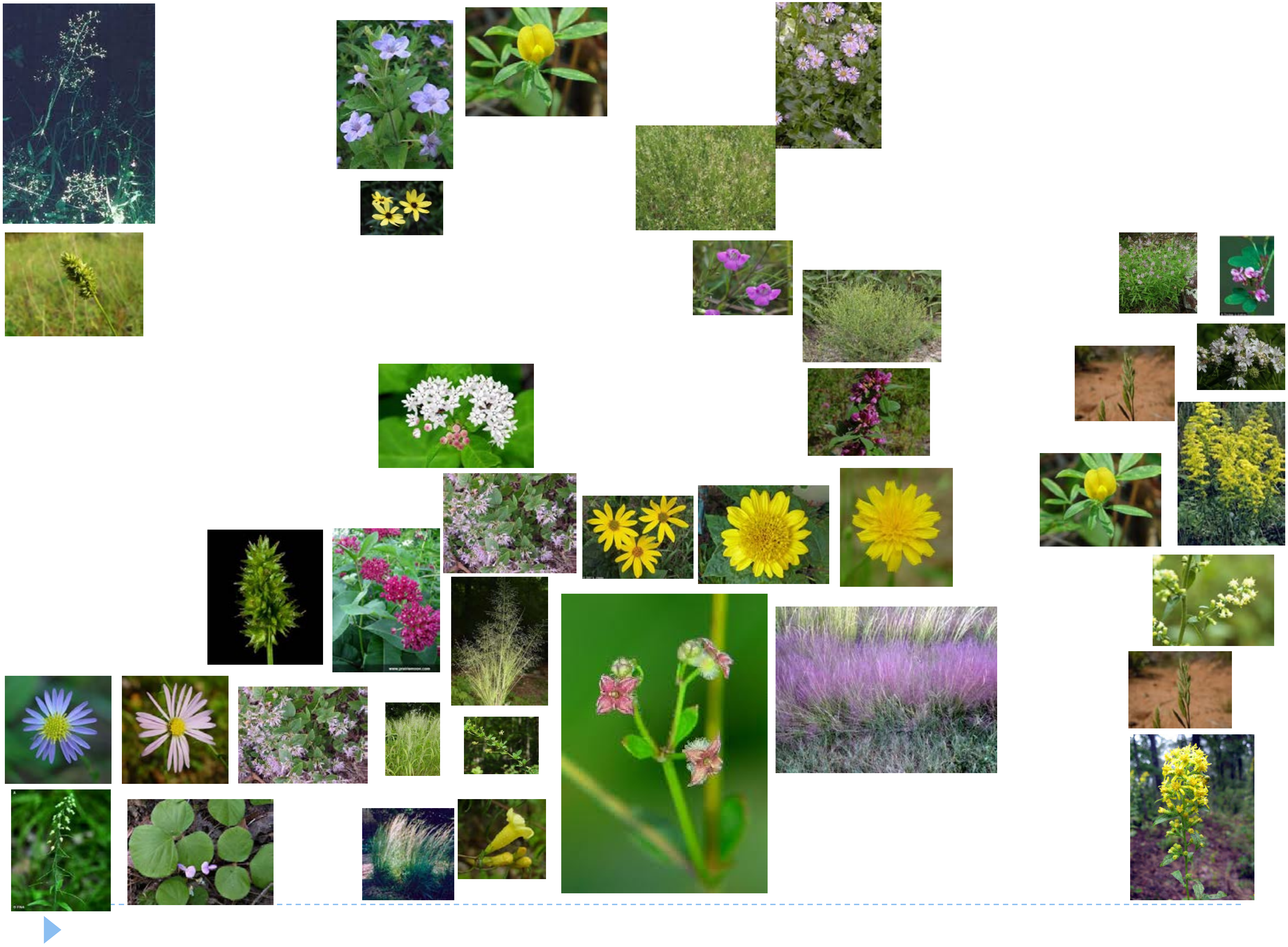

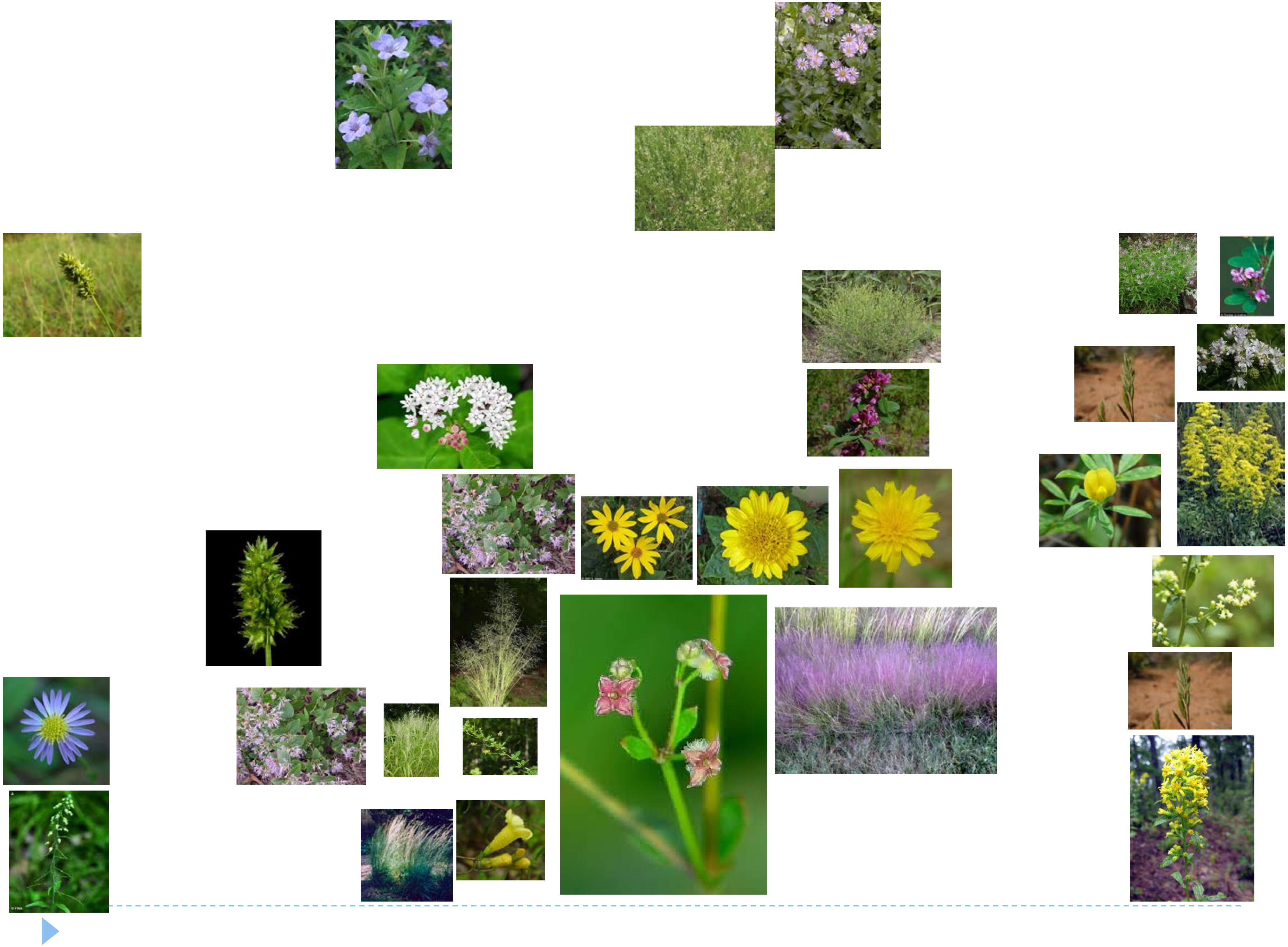










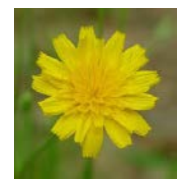



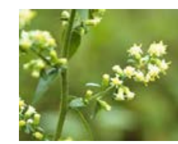






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Dry Upland – 7 out of 57

Danthonia spicata	poverty oatgrass
Elymus hystrix	bottlebrush grass
Krigia biflora	two-flower Cynthia
Lespedeza violacea	violet bush-clover
Cunila origanoides	stonemint
Galium pilosum	hairy bedstraw
Helianthus divericatus	woodland sunflower

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Dry Mesic Upland – 8 out of 59

Botrichium virginianum	rattlesnake fern
Brachyelytrum aristosum	north shorthusk
Bromus pubescens	hairy woodland brome
Cynoglossum virginianum	wild comfrey
Luzula multiflora	heath wood-rush
Monarda bradburiana	eastern beebalm
Muhlenbergia sobolifera	rock muhly
Solidago caesia	blue-stemmed goldenrod


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Parthenocissus quinquefolia
Virginia creeper
68

Toxicodendron radicans
poison ivy
73


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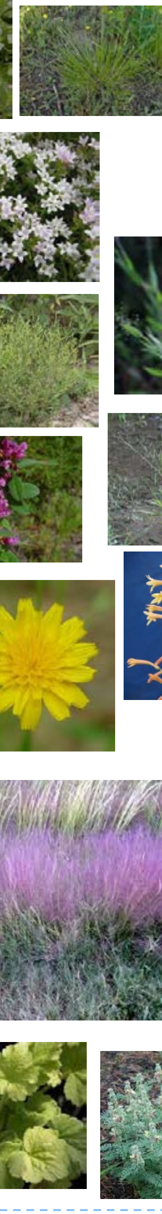
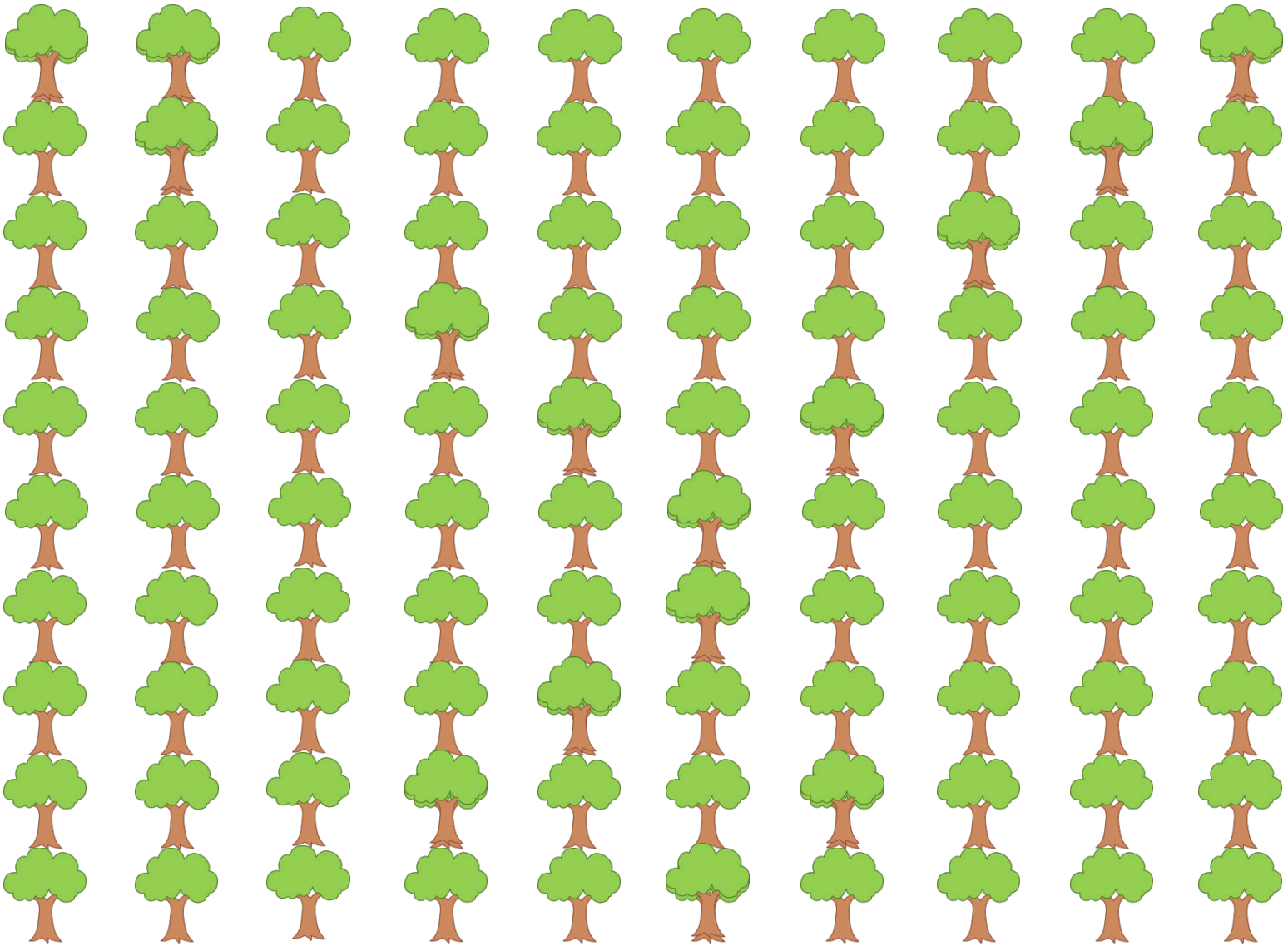
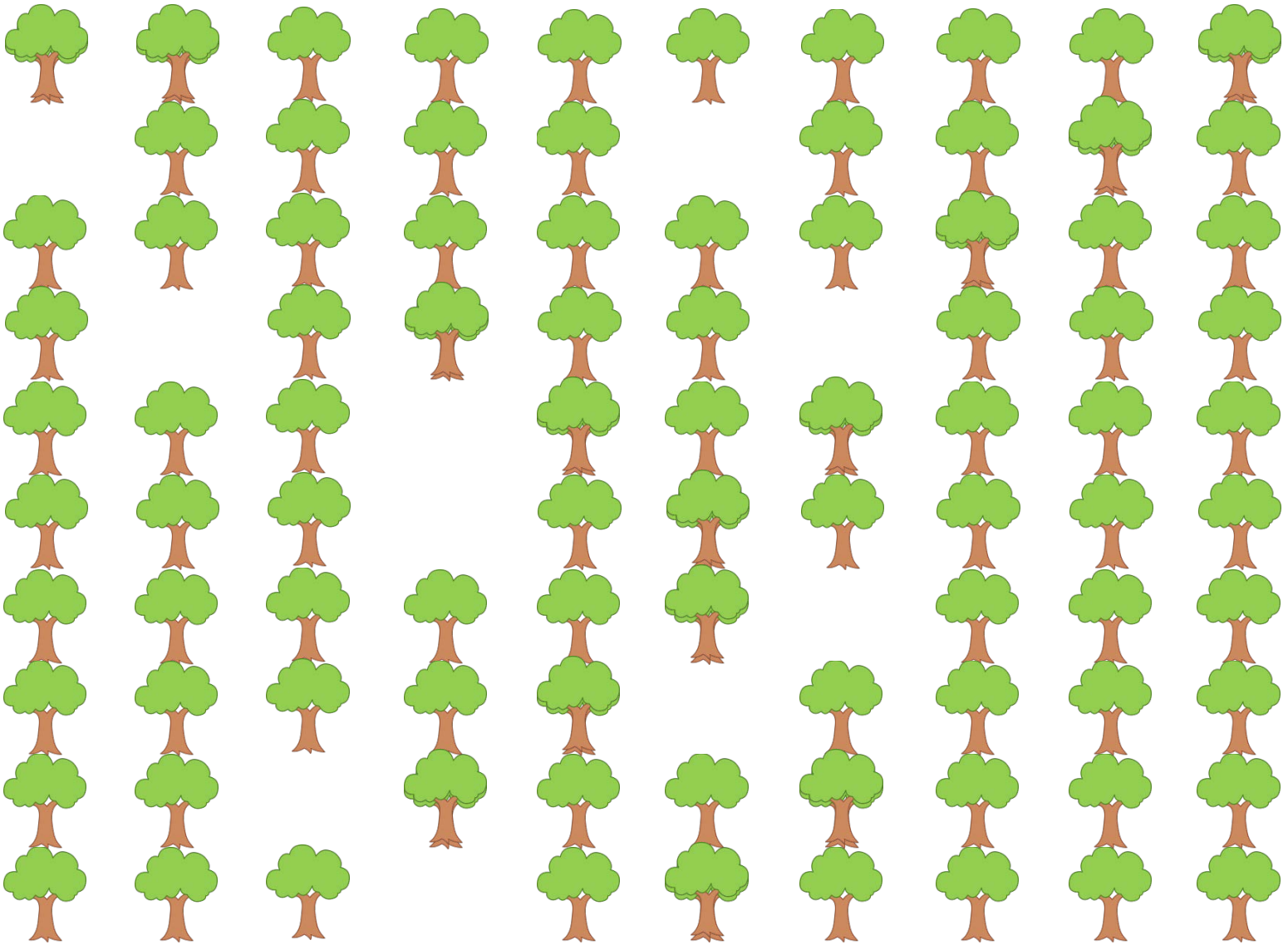
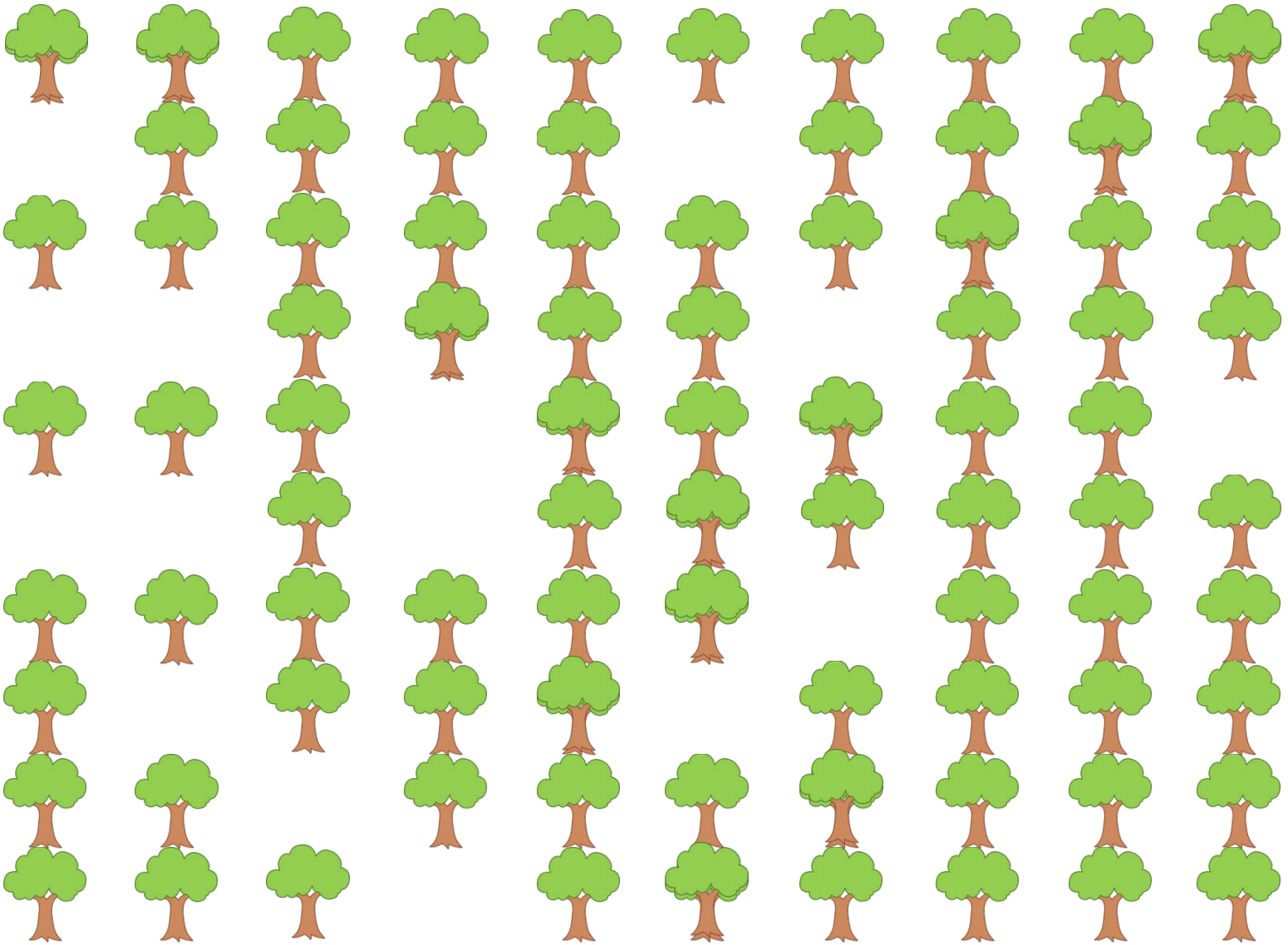
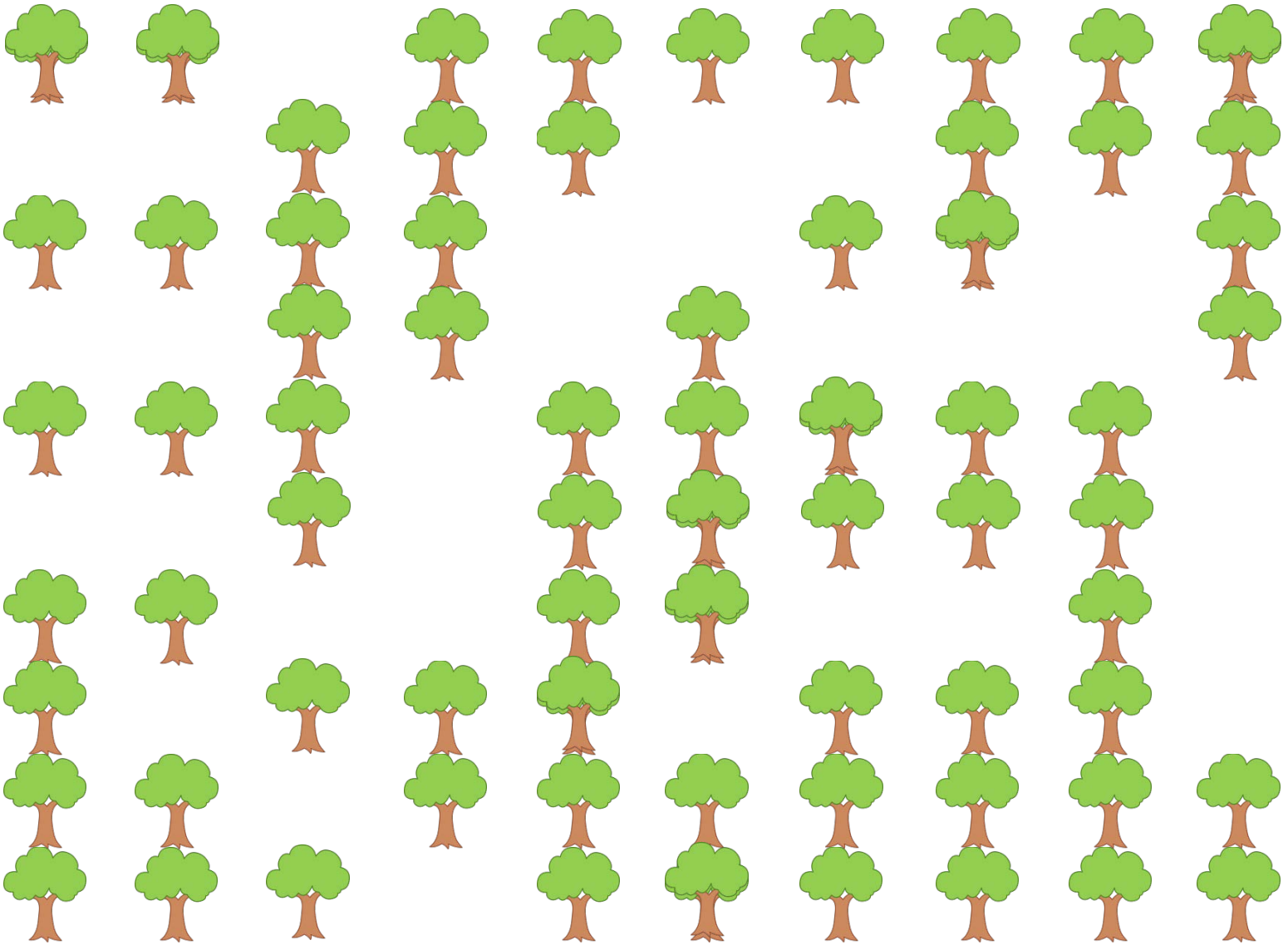
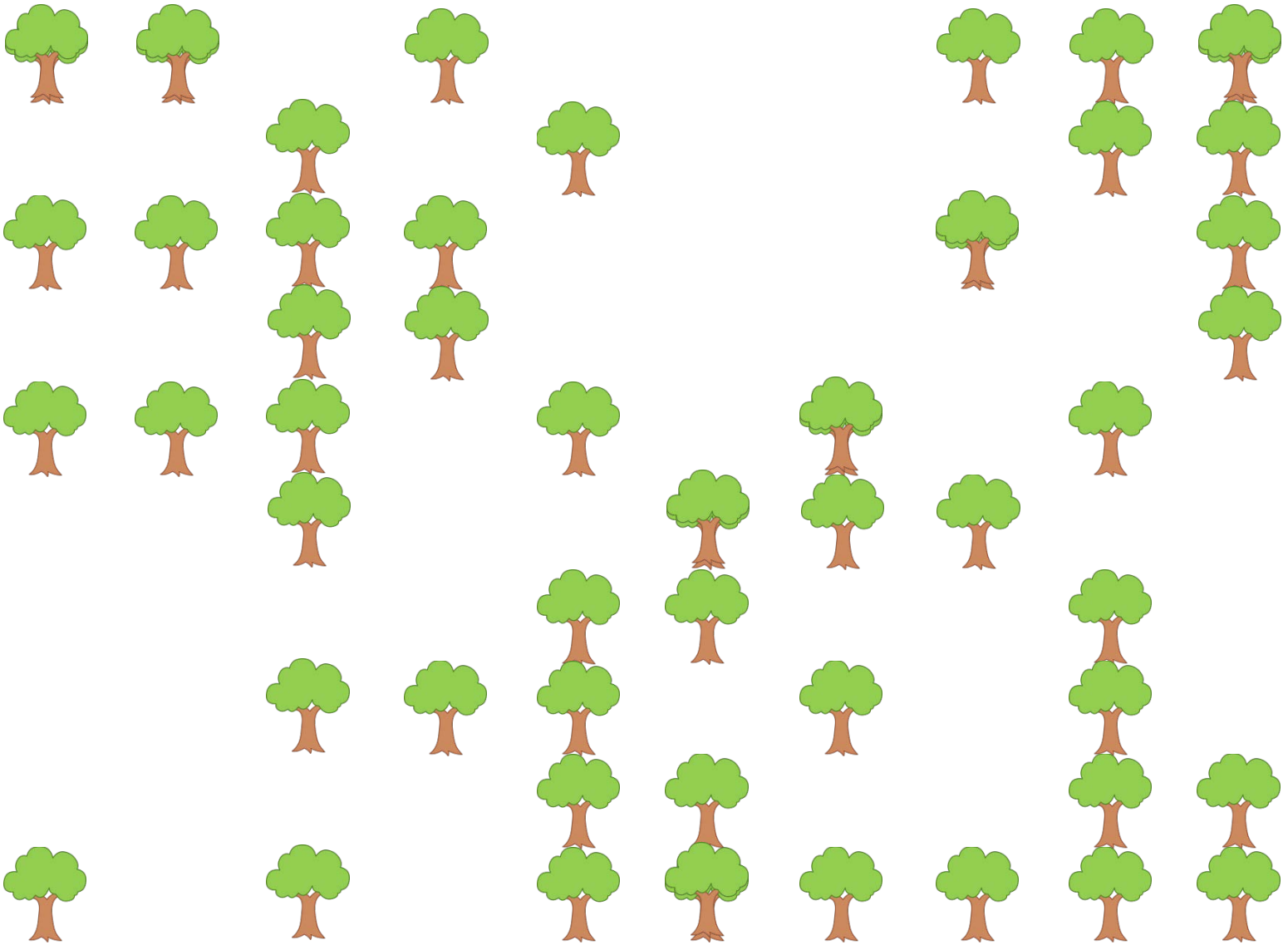


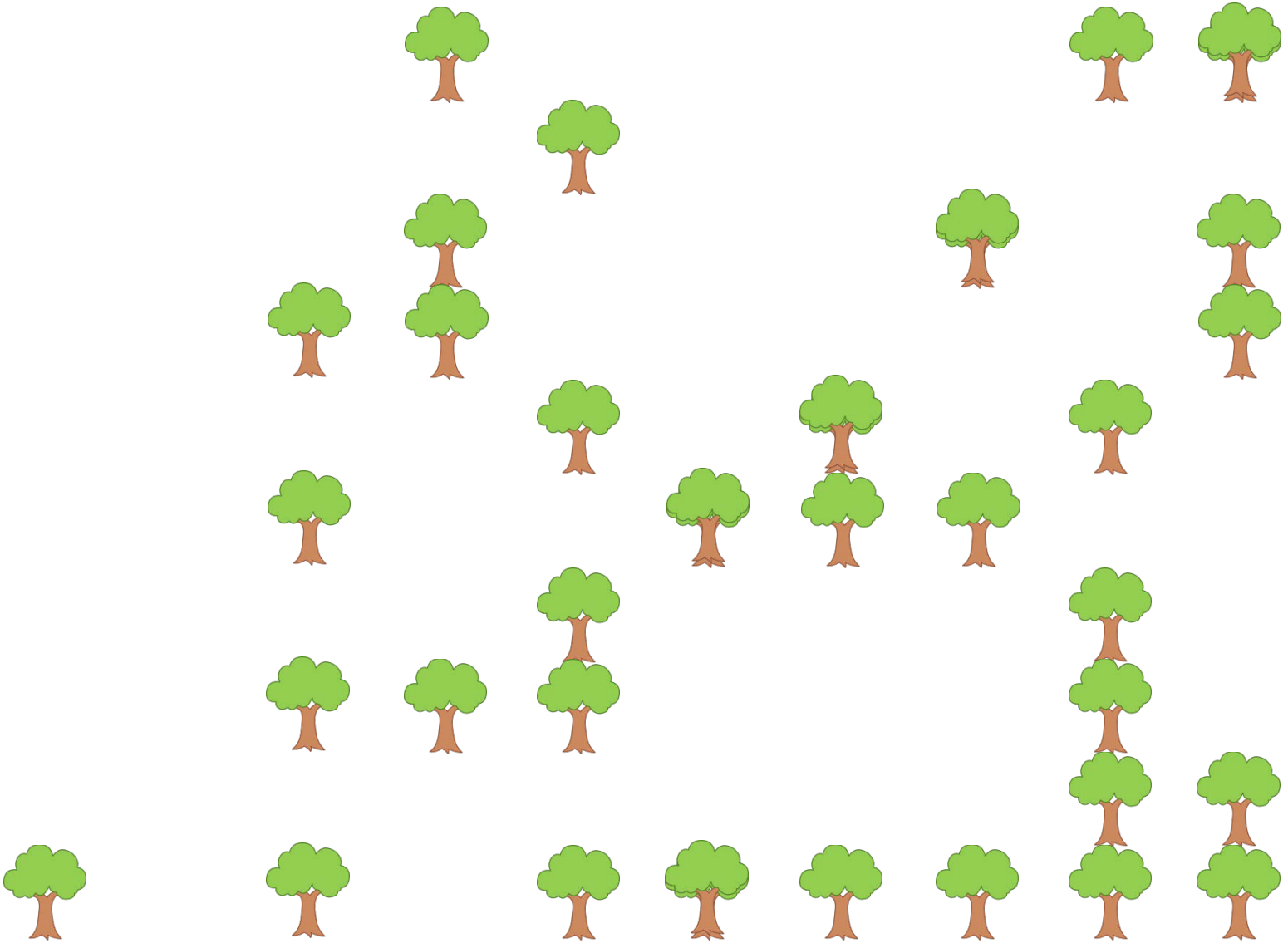


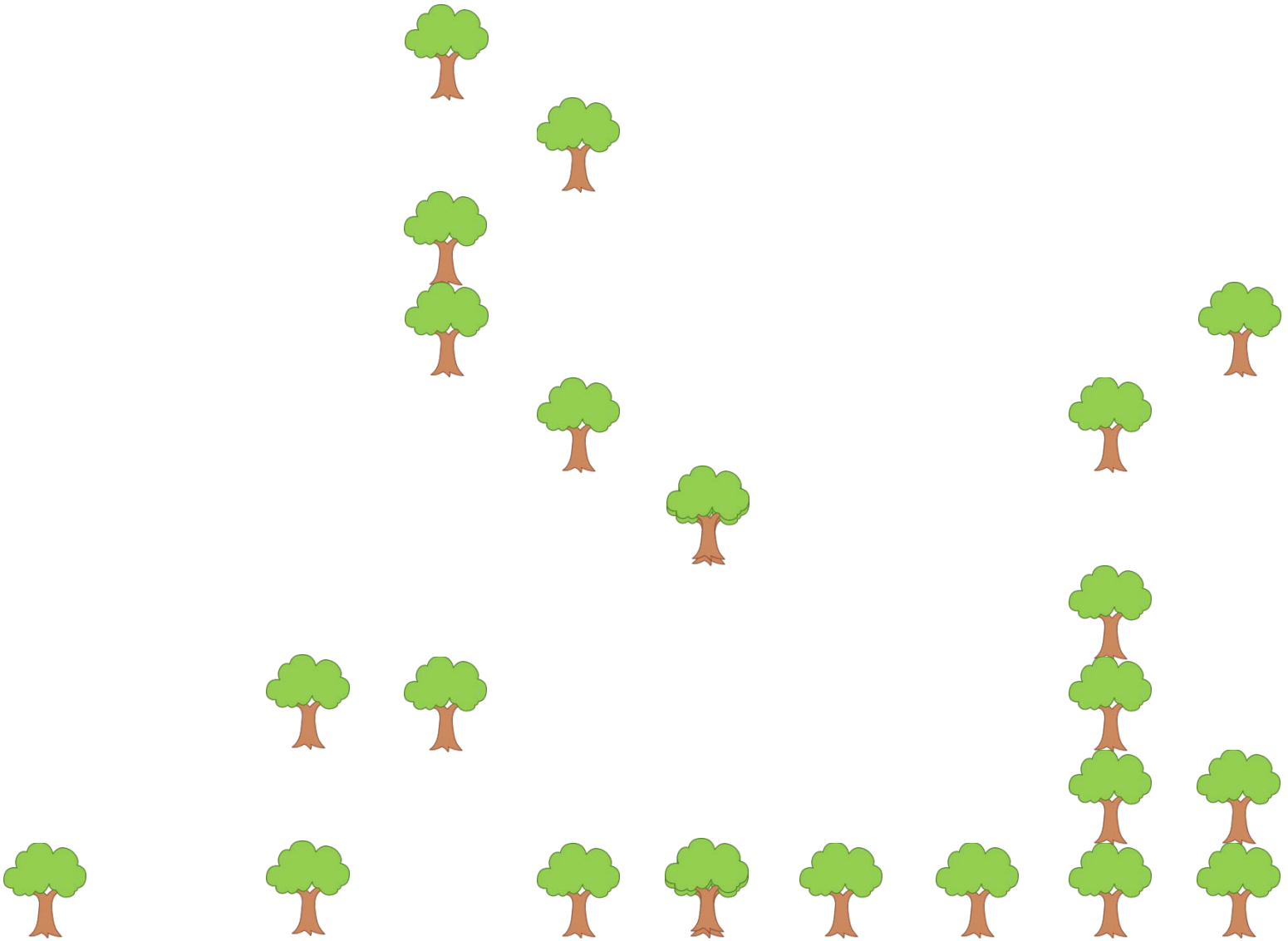












1 out of 100
saplings is an oak.

1980	1 in 3
Today	1 in 5

Canopy

So, why do we have this forest?

95 percent

65 percent

Benefits of this Forest

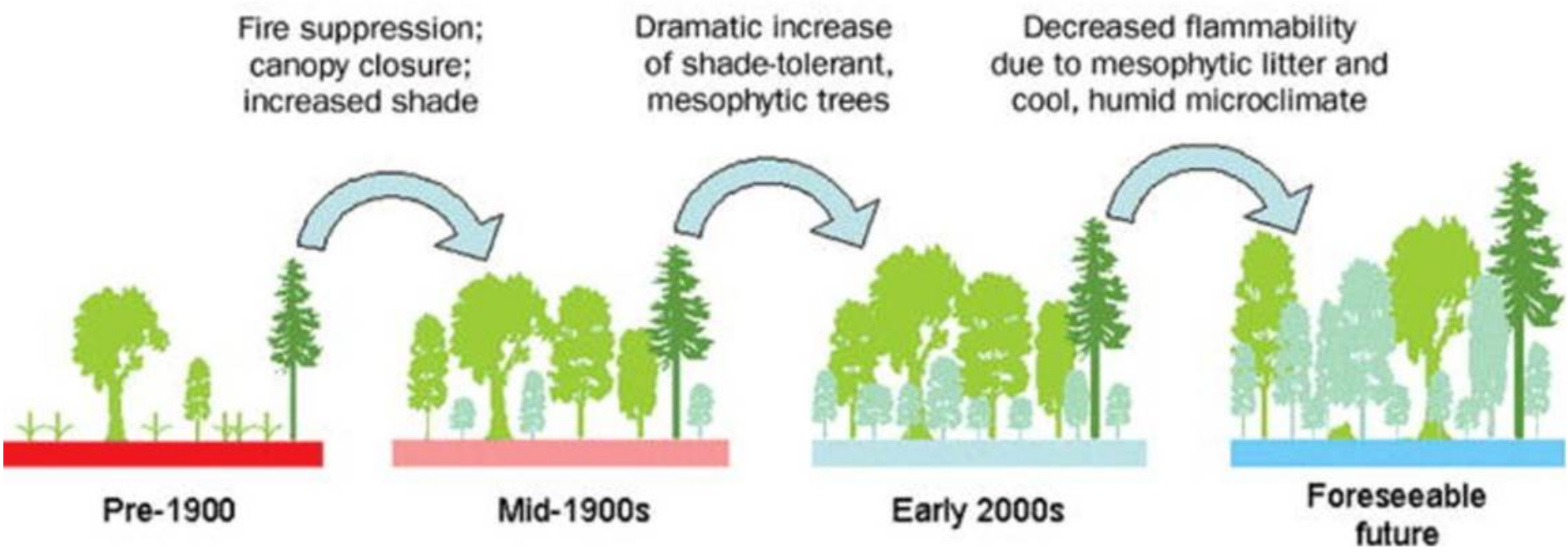
Flowers provide nectar for pollinators, seeds and other food sources.

Ground cover provides cover and places for brood rearing.

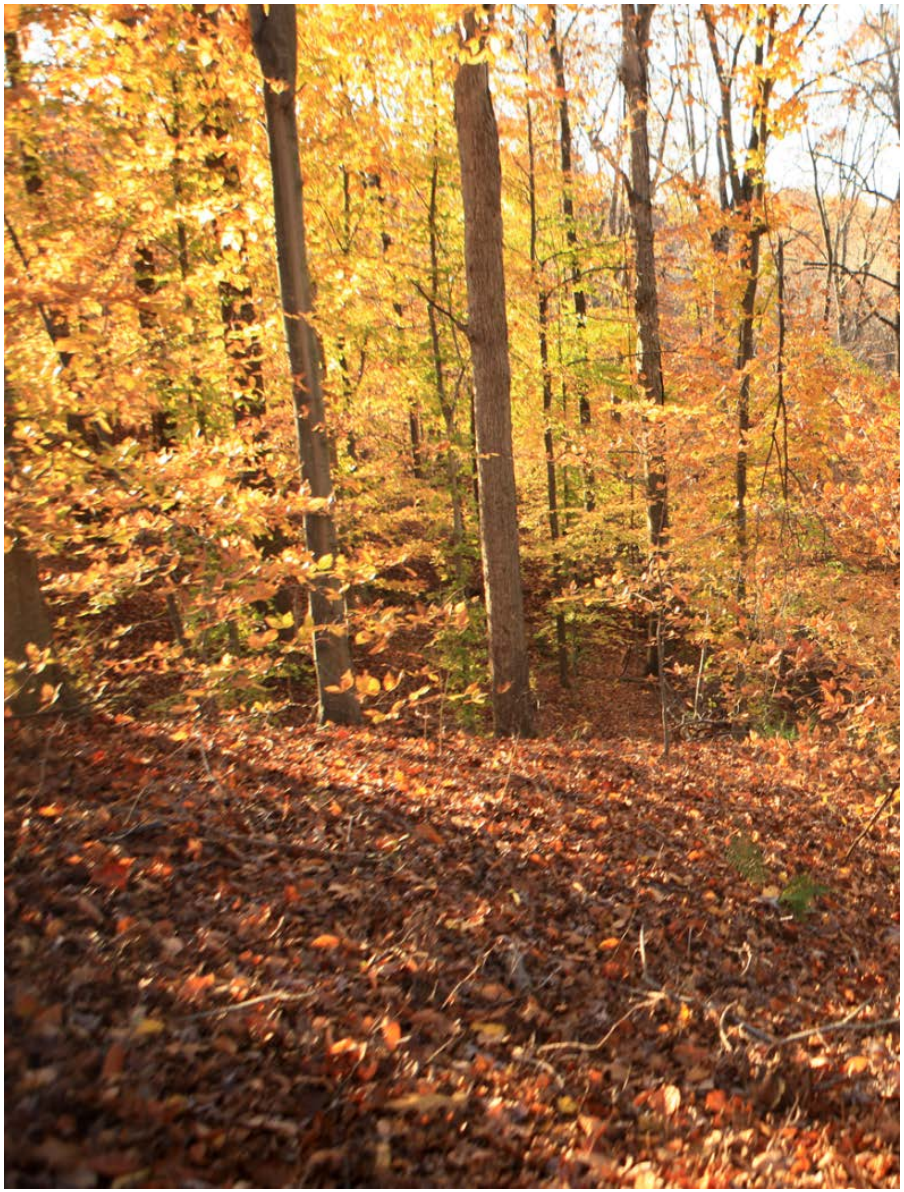
Down, dead wood provides cover, nesting sites and produces invertebrates.

Snags provide nesting sites, cover and produce invertebrates.

Trees provide food, nesting sites, dens, etc.

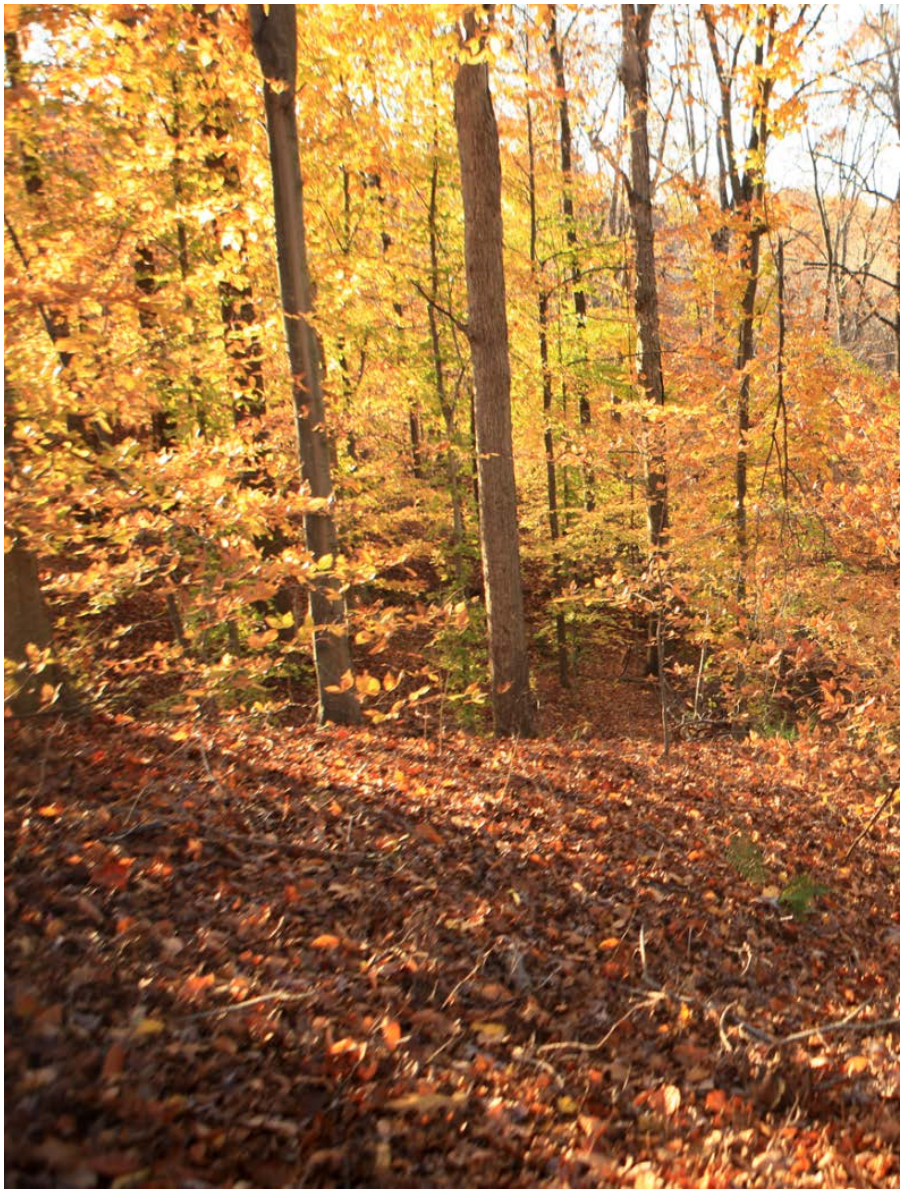


Gregory J. Nowacki, and Marc D. Abrams BioScience



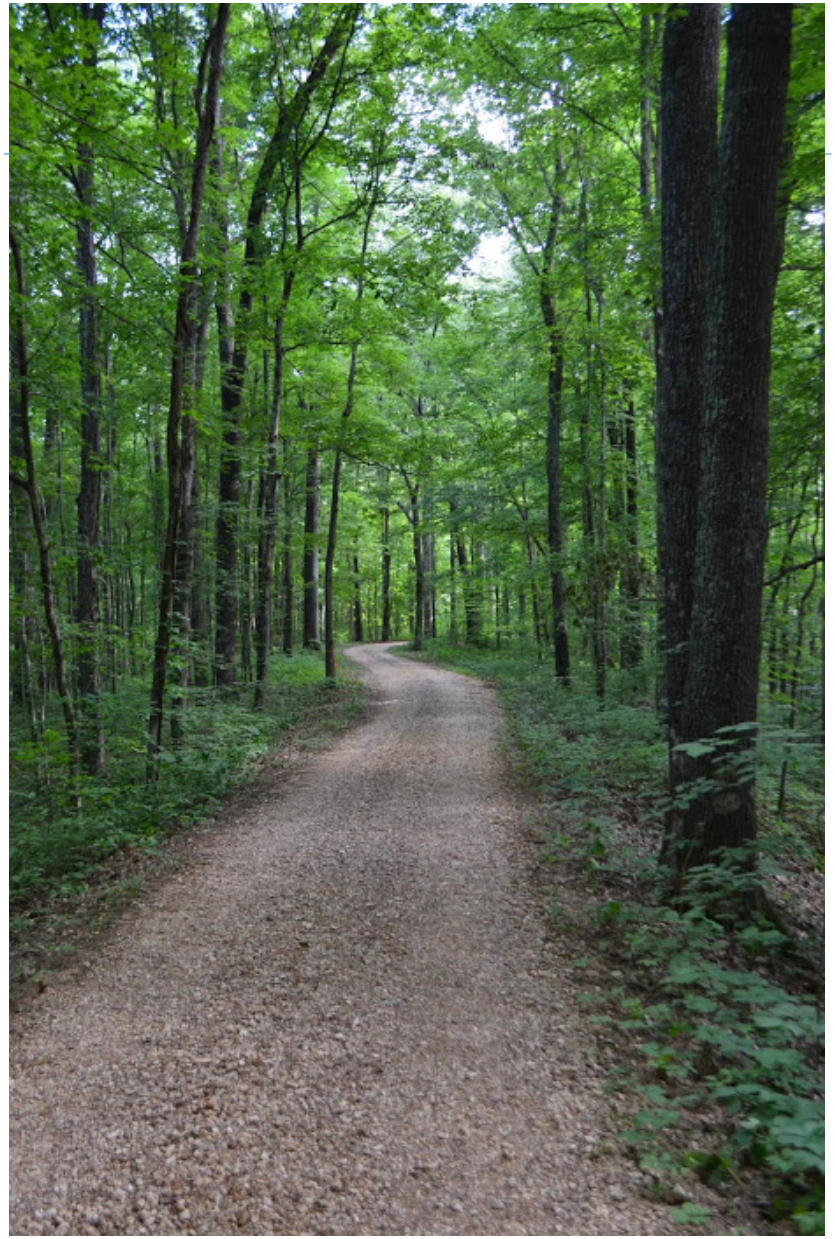
The Illinois Ozarks may be the first forest in central North America to completely convert from oak-hickory to maple-beech.

— Fralish & McArdle (2009)



The potential for a trophic cascade … is real. The loss of these early-successional mast-producing species and the decline in the volume of nuts and large buds will likely reduce the populations of larger wildlife species. There also will be a major negative impact on herbaceous stratum richness. …. The loss of green herbaceous foliage and fruits will impact insects, as well as Neotropical migrant birds, a portion of which feed in the understory.

— Fralish & McArdle (2009)



Restoration opportunities are rapidly waning as (a) fire-adaptive floras are progressively lost to shading, competition, and preferential herbivory; (b) older seed-bearing individuals succumb to old age and existing seed banks lose viability over time; and (c) understory and forest floor conditions become increasingly mesophytic.

— Nowacki and Abrams (2008)

Lisa Helmig (1997) predicted the Illinois Ozarks' conversion could be complete by 2050.

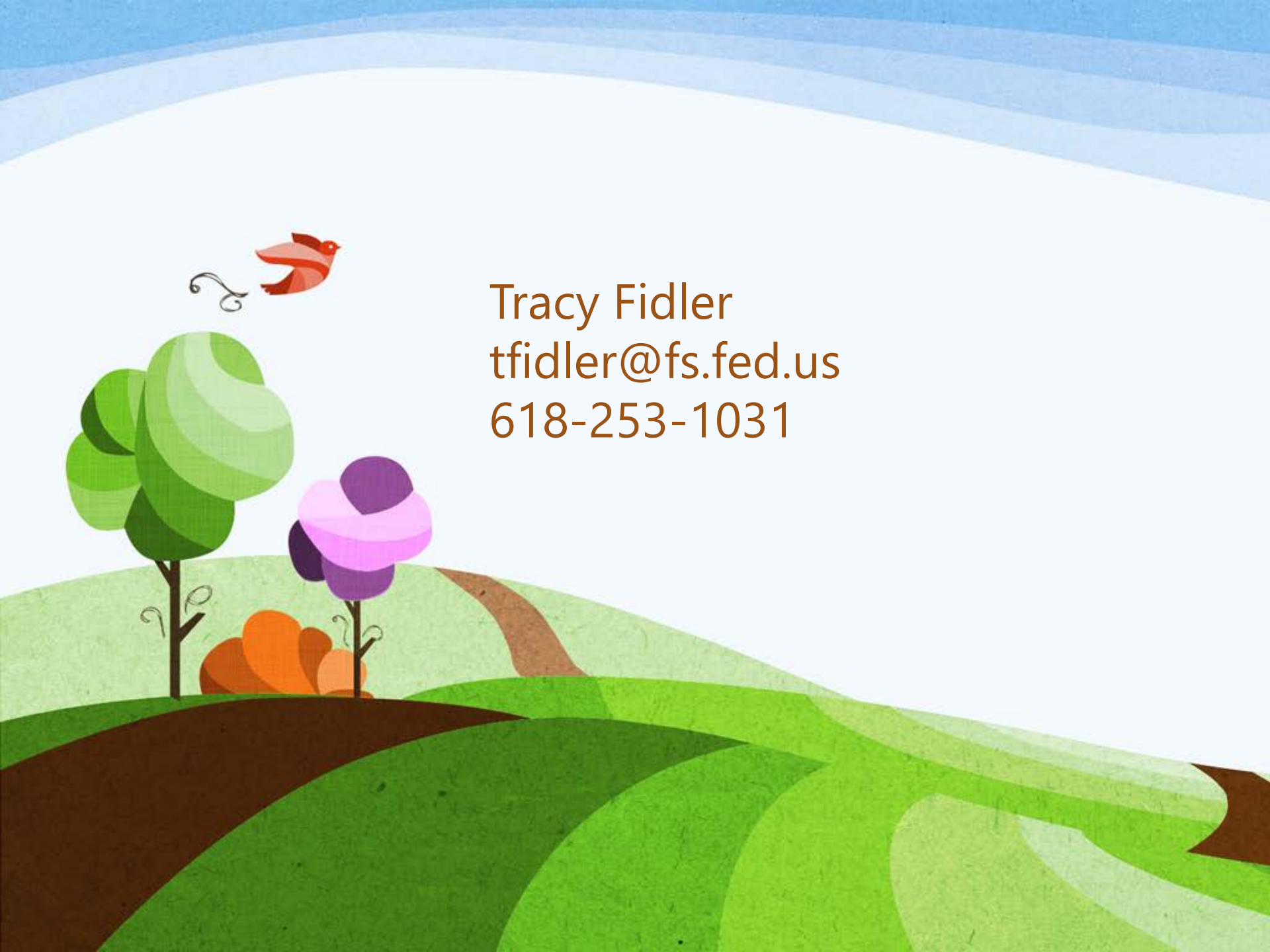
Oak forests are more diverse than maple forests.


Oaktober

You can be part of the solution.

But how?

- Role of fire in forest management
  - Charles Ruffner, SIU Forestry
- Role of invasive species control
  - Kevin Rohling, River to River CWMA
- Role of thinning and harvesting
  - Ben Snyder, IDNR Forest Resources



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