

Name _____

Date _____

Bamboo Basics

Ag in 10 Minutes a Day!

When you think about bamboo, if you are like many of us, the first image that comes to mind is of a giant panda, snacking on the plants. But, did you know that bamboo and bamboo products are becoming more popular than ever today? This versatile plant can do a lot more than feed cute animals!



What is Bamboo?

Bamboo is a type of grass often associated with Asia, but it grows naturally in many parts of the world, including the United States. There are more than 1400 species of bamboo. It is the fastest growing plant, with some varieties able to grow as much as 3 feet in a single day! Bamboo has hollow, **cylindrical** stems that are extremely strong. These characteristics make bamboo a popular material for many uses.

How Can Bamboo be Used?

Besides panda chow, bamboo is also eaten by people and other animals. You might have eaten bamboo shoots in an Asian stir fry dish, soup, or salad. They are a healthy ingredient full of fiber and nutrients. Bamboo is also used in medicines to treat asthma, fever, colds, and coughs. Fibers from the plants are made into **textiles**, such as yarn and cloth. Because of its amazing strength and flexibility, bamboo is crafted into some of the world's most beautiful **architecture**. Bamboo is also an excellent source of **biofuel**.

Why is Bamboo a Good Choice?

Our planet is running out of space. We are using up our resources too quickly. Since bamboo can grow so fast, and it is so versatile, it is an excellent choice for a **sustainable** and **renewable** resource. In fact, since it grows so rapidly, it would be practically impossible to ever use it all up. Many farmers have begun growing bamboo as an alternative to other crops because of its versatility and rapid growth.

Bamboo is good for the planet in other ways too. It releases more than 30% more oxygen than other plants, which also helps to reduce the amount of **carbon emissions**. It is good for the soil,



Image from [How is Bamboo redefining architecture in recent times? - RTF \(re-thinkingthefuture.com\)](http://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com)



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Name _____

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as it requires little water, and adds nutrients back to the soil. It requires no pesticides or fertilizers to grow. The decomposing leaves that fall provide enough nutrients to sustain the new growth. Every part of the bamboo plant is used, so there is no waste. Bamboo can grow so densely that the plants and their root system are an ideal barrier to **erosion**, especially in areas with steep mountains and hillsides.

In addition to being good for the planet, many cultures celebrate bamboo as a treat for the soul. There are many stories of bamboo's resistance to hardship. Bamboo was able to survive the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. Bamboo is a symbol of good luck and is often planted in gardens for its beauty and simplicity. It is used in Asian cultures as a symbol of peace and tranquility and is often included in practices of **Zen** and **Fung Shui**. Imagine walking this path on a warm spring day. How does the bamboo make you feel?



Image from [15 Tree Tunnels You Have To Walk Through \(wowtravel.me\)](http://www.wowtravel.me)

Bamboo Basics– Reading Passage

Directions: Read each question and fill in the best answer.

1. What kind of plant is bamboo?

- A. Tree
- B. Vine
- C. Grass
- D. Shrub

2. How fast can some species of bamboo grow?

- A. 3 feet per hour
- B. 3 feet per day
- C. 3 feet per year
- D. 3 feet per month

5. How much oxygen does bamboo release, compared to other plants?

- A. 30% more
- B. 30% less
- C. 10% more
- D. 10% less

6. Why is bamboo good to grow on hillsides?

- A. To bring more birds
- B. To improve the air
- C. To prevent erosion
- D. To increase insects

- C. Medicine
- D. Clothing

- D. It is an used up

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Extended Response: Use details from your own experience and information from the article in your response.

Write a persuasive letter to the mayor of your town explaining why a bamboo garden would be a good idea for your local park.

Bamboo Facts

15 percent of the world's population lives in a bamboo home

Bamboo has natural antibacterial properties

Bamboo is stronger than steel

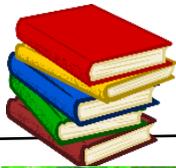
The first phonograph needle made by Alexander Graham Bell was created from a piece of bamboo

TRY THIS AT HOME!

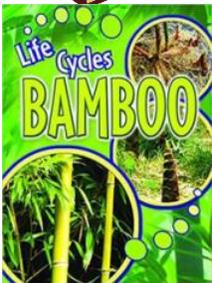
(ASK AN ADULT FIRST!)

Easy Bamboo Shoot Soup - Makes 4 servings

1. Bring 6 cups chicken or vegetable stock to a boil.
2. Add one 8oz can bamboo shoots and 1 tsp. Szechuan sauce and continue boiling.
3. Mix together 1 tsp cornstarch and 1 ½ tsp water until there are no lumps.
4. Stir into the soup to thicken.
5. Stir in 1 tsp light oil and salt and pepper to taste.



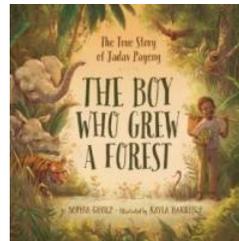
CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS:



LIFE CYCLES – BAMBOO

BY JULIE LUNDGREN

This book explains the cycle of life of a bamboo plant, and why it is important to animals, humans, and our planet.

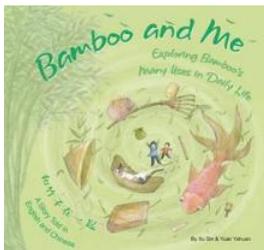


THE BOY WHO GREW A FOREST – THE TRUE STORY

OF JADAV PAYENG

BY SOPHIA GHOLZ

As a boy, Jadav Payeng was upset by the loss of land on his island home in India's Brahmaputra River. So, he began planting trees. What began as a small thicket of bamboo, grew over the years into a forest filled with native plants and animals.



BAMBOO AND ME

BY BIN XU

Told in both English and Chinese, *Bamboo and Me* is the story of a little boy whose house was surrounded by many bamboo forests and streams. Explore how bamboo played a part in his life all year round.