

Think Like a Tree

I am a mighty oak, a towering cedar, or a sturdy pine tree, reaching upward to the sky between the high granite walls that surround Yosemite Valley. Over many thousands of years, the Merced River has created a fertile floodplain for my home. Water from the Merced River, plus rain and snow, flow down into the ground between the rocks and grains of sand and clay. My roots reach deep within the soil for water. Fungi and bacteria in the soil break down organic matter, such as fallen leaves, into food that I can absorb through my roots.

As the sun passes above Yosemite Valley, the leaves on my branches capture energy from the sun and release oxygen into the air. Winter storms cause my branches to sway and bend. Sometimes a branch will break and go crashing to the ground. During the spring and summer, birds and squirrels will raise their families in the safety of my branches.

I provide the Ahwahneechee with acorns for food, and wood for shelter and heat. They treat me as a respected friend. Visitors to Yosemite Valley hike through my forests, have a picnic in my shade, or photograph my beautiful fall colors. Sometimes they will even give me a hug!

The seasons, the weather, and the Merced River are always changing. Those changes have made me strong and I have adapted to them. Visitors to Yosemite can help me to grow and thrive by making sure that I have clean water and air. You can do your part by conserving water, disposing of trash properly, and reducing your energy use.