Forest Life Cycle Cards

During an unusually hot and dry summer, a forest fire swept through a watershed and killed most of the old trees in the forest.

The fire opened the Lodgepole pine cones and released some seeds onto the bare soil. Other seeds blew in from the nearby unburned forest. Thousands of new lodgepole pine seeds, survived and began to grow in the open burned area. The lodgepole seedlings are the pioneer species, or first species to move into an area after a fire, other soil disturbance.

The Douglas fir seeds that blew into the hot open area, died under the harsh sun. The lodgepole seedlings grew quickly and within a couple of years formed a thick, shady covering over the forest floor.

In the shade of the lodgepole seedlings, with extra protection from a nearby log, one Douglas fir tree seed sprouted and began to grow.

Through the next 100 years, the Lodgepole pines grew straight and tall. Some trees fell over in wind storms and some died because they didn't get enough sunlight. The Douglas fir tree continued to grow under the protection of the lodgepole canopy.

As the Lodgepole pines died, sunlight was able to reach the Douglas fir growing below and allowed this tree to grow above the canopy of the Lodgepole pine trees. When our Douglas fir tree was 150 years old, it was 90 feet tall and 6 feet around. Lots of animals lived in its branches.

Hikers often stopped to admire its size and uniqueness there amongst the lodgepole pines.

Lightening hit our tree on its 160 birthday and killed the top of the tree. A new top grew from a side branch.

When our tree was 200 years old, a severe wind storm blew over several neighboring Lodgepole pine trees, and one crashed into our tree on its way to the ground.