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The Burning of the Rainforests

The popular characterization of the Amazon Rainforest as the 'lungs of the Earth' is a somewhat misleading exaggeration. There just isn't enough carbon dioxide available in the atmosphere for a patch of forest this size to generate 20% of the Earth's oxygen, which is the percentage often (erroneously) attributed to the Amazon Rainforest.

That being said, the wholesale burning of this land is a terrible idea for lots of other very compelling reasons.

When a tree burns, much of its carbon matter is released into the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide. And of course the very reason the forest is being burned is to create new pasture for oxygen-consuming, carbon dioxide-and-methane-producing cattle.

When it comes to sheer number of species, only the oceans can claim more biodiversity than the Amazon Rainforest. It also functions like an enormous air conditioner, helping to counteract the effects of climate change.

Plant and animal species in the Amazon Rainforest have long been prized for their inherent medicinal qualities. Only a fraction of this potential has been explored, and one can only imagine what life-saving cures might be destroyed before they could be discovered.

