

At first, the forest looks destroyed.

The ground is black, the trunks are bare, and the air smells like ash. Charred branches lie scattered across the landscape.

**From a distance, it can seem as though nothing survived.**

Beneath the surface, many parts of the forest are still alive.

The damage is easier to see than the life that remains hidden.

Some roots survive underground, protected from the heat.

Seeds that have been waiting in the soil begin to respond to sunlight.

With the tree canopy gone, more light reaches the forest floor. Tiny green shoots appear in places that looked lifeless a few weeks earlier.

**The first signs of recovery are often small and easy to miss.**

Insects return first, finding food and shelter in the burned wood. Birds follow, feeding on the insects and spreading new seeds.

Even fallen logs continue to play an important role in the ecosystem. As they decay, they return nutrients to the soil.

Grasses and wildflowers grow quickly in the open space.

Color gradually returns to areas that once appeared completely black.

Over time, shrubs and young trees begin to compete for light.

Animals continue to return as food and shelter become more available.

The forest that grows back is not exactly the same as the one that burned.

**Recovery is not a return to the past, but the beginning of a new pattern.**