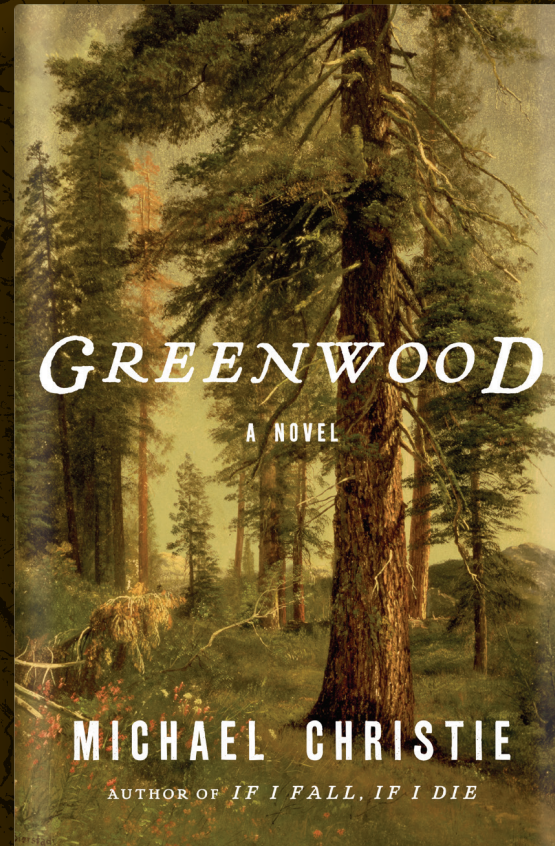


# GREENWOOD

## BOOK CLUB KIT



*“How intimately a book is related to the tree and its rings. . . .  
The layers of time, preserved, for all to examine.”*

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Greenwood* is part of a new genre of novels known as CliFi (climate fiction). What makes it fall under that category? Do any of the novel's environmental themes resonate with you?
2. At its heart, *Greenwood* is a family saga. How did the boyhoods of brothers Everett and Harris make them into the men they became? How do you think Willow's nomadic life affected her son Liam? How did Jake's orphaning influence the person she became?
3. The Great Withering began with the trees—"the wave of fungal blights and insect infestations, to which old growth was particularly defenseless." What environmental stresses do you see in your life today? How do you personally address these issues?
4. "The best sacrifices, Willow knows, are always made in solitude, with not a camera in sight." Characters make many sacrifices in *Greenwood*—Everett for his brother during the war, Temple for the downtrodden, Feeney out of love for his principles. What other sacrifices did you notice in the novel? Which character's sacrifice moved you most and why?
5. How did you feel about Meena's reaction to Liam's painstakingly created gift, a homemade viola that replicated the Stradivarius Meena so loved? Were her actions necessary? Cruel? What did her reaction say about their relationship?
6. The word "roots" has many meanings in *Greenwood*—a tree's stability, a family's ancestry, a person's connection to place. Which meaning resonated most with you and why?
7. "Time, Liam has learned, is not an arrow." *Greenwood* travels back and forth through time—deepening characters and their backstories, connecting characters in unforeseen ways, twisting the plot like roots. In fact, the book's timeline, starting and ending with the most recent years, and with the earliest events tucked into the middle, is structured like the rings of a tree. How did this structure affect your reading experience? How would the reading experience have changed if the story was told linearly?
8. Why do you think author Michael Christie chose to write the center section—1908—in the voice of a Greek chorus of townspeople? How does this perspective enhance our understanding of the Greenwood boys' upbringing?
9. Christie writes that nature has taught Temple "things she'd never speak in polite conversation. Like the fact that Mother Nature's true aim is to convert us people back into the dust we came from, just as quick as possible." Like Temple, people tend to view Mother Nature as either the great destroyer (earthquakes, floods, the Dust Bowl), or the great nurturer (providing food, shelter, oxygen, and more). Which view did each character take? Which do you lean toward? Do you think both can be true? Why or why not?
10. What do you think of Jake's final actions at the end of the book? Did she make the right decisions? How would you have handled the revelations?



# THE PERFECT “GREENWOOD” DRINKS FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB

A simple, comforting pot of green tea will do the trick,  
but for a little something more, try these recipes from author Michael Christie.

## DOUGLAS FIR TEA



### INGREDIENTS

This is my absolute favorite. It gets a double dose of fir from these ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon fir or spruce needles
- 1 ½ cups boiling water

### DIRECTIONS

This simple popular tea requires just a tablespoon of needles in 1 ½ cups of boiling water. Strain into a mug after steeping for 2 minutes. Add honey if you wish. This is a nice iced tea as well.

## DOUGLAS FIR GIMLET



### INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ ounces Douglas Fir-infused vodka (see recipe below)
- ½ ounce lime juice
- Heaping teaspoon of Douglas fir syrup (see recipe below)

### DIRECTIONS

Chill a small cocktail glass. Fill cocktail shaker with cubed ice. Let this sit for a minute. Pour in all ingredients. Shake vigorously for as long as you can stand. Remove glass from the freezer and rub a cut lime around the rim. Strain into the chilled glass.

## FIR OR SPRUCE SYRUP



### INGREDIENTS

This syrup is a great treat for everything from waffles to cocktails.

- 1 tablespoon fir or spruce needles
- 1 ½ cups boiling water

### DIRECTIONS

Put the fir or spruce tips or needles into a food processor. Pulse until very finely chopped. In a saucepan put sugar, corn syrup, and ⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons water. Stir and bring to a boil. Boil for one minute then add the chopped needles. Remove from the heat. Steep for 3–4 hours. Strain through a fine sieve. Discard the green goop in the strainer. Put in a jar and keep refrigerated.

## FIR OR SPRUCE VODKA



### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup fir or spruce needles or tips
- ½ to ¾ of a 750 milliliter bottle of vodka

### DIRECTIONS

What could be simpler? Put 1 cup fir or spruce needles into a blender with a half or ¾ of a 750 milliliter bottle of vodka (as much as you can get in a blender). Hit “liquefy” and blend for 2 minutes. Pour this mixture and the balance of the vodka bottle into a large jar and put in the refrigerator for two days. Give it a little shake from time to time. Strain contents through a fine sieve and return to the bottle. I like to keep this in the freezer. The fir or spruce flavor is somewhat perishable. It benefits from being kept cold.

PREPARE SOMETHING EARTHY TO SERVE YOUR BOOK CLUB FRIENDS

## CHANTERELLE TOASTS

Makes 16 toasts

### INGREDIENTS

- *½ stick unsalted butter*
- *1 pound chanterelle or other fragrant mushrooms, ends trimmed, stalks and caps cut into ½-inch pieces*
- *½ cup heavy cream*
- *Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper*
- *8 slices white Pullman bread, crusts removed, toasted and cut into 1-by-3-inch strips*

### DIRECTIONS

1. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat and cook mushrooms, stirring occasionally, until liquid evaporates, 8 to 10 minutes.
2. Add cream, a little at a time, and cook, stirring, until cream coats the back of a spoon and mushrooms are thoroughly coated. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon onto toasts, and serve immediately.

Courtesy of [marthastewart.com](http://marthastewart.com)

# MORE PLEASE? MORE TREES!

## 10 Fun Facts

1. **Earth has more than 60,000 known tree species.**
2. **Trees help us breathe—and not just by producing oxygen.**  
Trees—especially old-growth forests—provide a valuable check on our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. One tree can absorb as much as 48 lb. of carbon dioxide a year.
3. **Trees lower air temperature** by evaporating water via their leaves.
4. **Trees improve water quality** by slowing and filtering rainwater and protecting aquifers and watersheds.
5. **Trees can defend themselves.** Some trees produce chemicals to combat leaf-eating insects (by attracting birds that feast on the little buggers).
6. **Trees in a forest can “talk” to each other** and share nutrients through an underground “internet” built by soil fungi.
7. **A large oak tree can drop 10,000 acorns in one year.** In the U.S., acorns represent a major food source for more than 100 vertebrate species.
8. **Pine cones have genders.** Male pine cones shed pollen and female pine cones make seeds. When the wind blows pollen into the female cones, you guessed it, the seeds become pollinated.
9. **The phrase “knock on wood”** comes from a time when primitive pagans used to rap on trees to summon the protective spirits that resided in them.
10. **Adding one tree to an open pasture can increase the pasture’s bird biodiversity from almost zero species to as high as eighty.**

Sources:

[mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/blogs/facts-about-trees](http://mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/blogs/facts-about-trees)  
[precisiontreemn.com/tips/14-fun-facts-about-trees.html](http://precisiontreemn.com/tips/14-fun-facts-about-trees.html)

## What can you and your family do to help prevent deforestation?

1. **Ditch the printer:** The less you print, the less paper is used . . . and fewer trees are cut down.
2. **Double-sided paper:** If you must print, print on both sides of the page.
3. **Go digital with your bills.**
4. **Buy only FSC-Certified wood products:** The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) ensures these products were sourced in an environmentally responsible way.
5. **Switch to bamboo paper:** Bamboo is easily sustainable and grows to maturity within five years (a lot faster than trees).
6. **Reuse gift bags.**
7. **Plant trees.**
8. **Avoid paper towels:** Cut up an old towel, wipe down counters or clean up spills, then wash and reuse.
9. **Paper towel alternatives:** If you need paper towels, buy tree-free or recycled paper towels instead of ones made from tree pulp.
10. **Switch from paper napkins to cloth napkins.**
11. **Use cloth diapers:** Paper diapers are a strain on the environment (and our landfills).
12. **Educate others:** Whether it be your children, friends, or colleagues, the more people are aware of what they can do to help prevent deforestation, the better.



# FURTHER READING

## FICTION

AMERICAN WAR by Omar El Akkad

CLADE by James Bradley

THE DREAMERS by Karen Thompson Walker

ORYX AND CRAKE, THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD, MADDADDAM The MaddAddam Trilogy by Margaret Atwood

THE OVERSTORY by Richard Powers

THE GRAPES OF WRATH by John Steinbeck

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## NONFICTION

THE WILD TREES by Richard Preston

THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES by Jim Robbins

THE SECRET THERAPY OF TREES by Marco Mencagli and Marco Nieri

FRUIT TRESS IN EVERY GARDEN by Orin Martin

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES by Peter Wohlleben

# ORGANIZATIONS THAT ADVOCATE FOR TREES AND FORESTS

## AMERICAN FORESTS ([americanforests.org](http://americanforests.org))

The nation's oldest nonprofit citizen conservation organization, founded in 1875. Their efforts helped create the National Park and National Forest systems in the United States. American Forests plants millions of trees each year and advocates the benefits of both rural and urban trees, good science, and sound policy.

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ARBORICULTURE ([isa-arbor.com](http://isa-arbor.com))

Promotes the care and development of a worldwide healthy tree population.

## NATIONAL ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION ([arborday.org](http://arborday.org))

Helps promote tree care and conservation.

## ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES ([arborday.org/programs/alliance-for-community-trees/](http://arborday.org/programs/alliance-for-community-trees/))

A network of community-based organizations dedicated to improving the livability of their towns and cities through planting and caring for trees.

## RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK ([ran.org](http://ran.org))

Works to protect rainforests and the human rights of those living in and around them, calling out companies and industries that drive deforestation.



HOGARTH