The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias

In 1864, **for the first time in history,** the United States Congress passed an act protecting two pieces of land for **preservation and public use, forever.** This act laid the foundation for the national parks and protected areas in our country today. Those two pieces of land were Yosemite Valley and the **Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.**

The ecology of giant sequoia groves is complex and remarkable. We often think of **fire** as a bad thing, but **sequoia ecosystems depend** on it. Frequent fires clear the immense amount of branches, needles, and cones on the forest floor, enriching the soil so sequoia seedlings can thrive. When there is no fire, there is not enough open space or nutrients for new sequoias to grow.

The cones of the giant sequoia are small and secure; tightly retaining over 200 seeds inside. Another reason sequoias need fire is to **open up those tightly sealed cones** and release the tiny seeds inside to float down to the forest floor, where they can germinate and grow.

Perhaps the most famous tree in the grove, the **Grizzly Giant,** is about **1,800 years old.** Can you imagine the millions of people and animals who have come and gone and been thankful for that one tree?