

## Mahogany Tree

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Recording: Magical Earth

### Background information:

The Selva Lacandona rain forest in eastern Chiapas, Mexico was the ancient and continuous home of a small group of Lacandon Maya Indians until 1965, when logging roads bulldozed by timber companies opened the way for cattle-ranchers and peasant villagers, all backed by Mexican government policies. More than half of this rain forest was eradicated by 1987, and the intimate forest life of the native people was altered. The Lacandon Maya wisdom for farming within a tropical forest includes timing the planting of crops with signals from the seasons, such as when the flowers drop from the mahogany tree.

Chorus: When you see, when you see the mahogany tree,  
oh, tell me what do you see?  
When you see, when you see the mahogany tree  
in the rainforest of Mexico.

1. I see, said the farmer, my calendar tree.  
Mahogany flowers speak to me.  
When the blossoms fall and the petals are torn,  
I know that it's time to plant the corn.

2. I see, said the great bird, my butterfly tree.  
The food in the branches speaks to me.  
I will feast on the moths that hide at the top  
while the monkeys howl and the raindrops drop.

3. I see, said the logger, my money tree.  
The promise of lumber speaks to me.  
This could bring a big price at the company town.  
Send the bulldozers in and we'll cut it right down.

4. I see, said the banker, my money tree.  
The shine of the wood speaks to me.  
On the forty-fourth floor this could make a fine desk.  
Move the bulldozers in and I'll see to the rest.

5. Stop, said the child, it's my grandmother tree.  
I've always known she can speak to me.  
She lives in the Mayan memory as a tree of life for my family.

Last chorus: Come around, come around the mahogany tree.  
To cut her down you'll have to pass by me.  
We stand in a circle as a family, protect the rainforest of Mexico.