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Greener trees may be sign a volcano will erupt – 2nd June 2025

Level 4

For centuries, scientists have been predicting when volcanoes will erupt. This has been pretty unreliable. However, a study from scientists in the USA say they are a step closer to more accurate forecasts. They used images from space to detect changes in the colour of leaves near volcanoes. The scientists found an increase in carbon dioxide levels emitted by two active volcanoes in Costa Rica. This changed the colour of trees in the surrounding areas.

Current methods of predicting eruptions include checking seismic activity and carbon dioxide emissions. Monitoring the colour of leaves from space could give better predictions. The science is easy to understand. As magma moves up through Earth's crust, it releases carbon dioxide. Trees absorb this and their leaves become greener. A website said: "These signs can help to protect communities against the worst effects of volcanic blasts."

Level 5

For centuries, volcanologists have been predicting when volcanoes will erupt. Forecasting when a volcano might blow has been pretty unreliable. However, a study from NASA scientists and the Smithsonian Institution say they are a step closer to providing more accurate forecasts. They used images from space to detect changes in the colour of leaves near volcanoes. The study showed that an increase in carbon dioxide levels emitted by two active volcanoes in Costa Rica had an impact on the colour of foliage. Trees in the surrounding areas became greener.

Current methods of predicting volcanic explosions include checking seismic activity, changes in ground height, and carbon dioxide emissions. NASA said its new method of monitoring the colour of foliage from space could give better predictions. The science behind this is easy to understand. As magma moves upwards through Earth's crust, it releases carbon dioxide. Trees absorb this and their leaves become greener. The LiveScience website said: "These signs can help to protect communities against the worst effects of volcanic blasts, including lava flows...and toxic gas clouds."

Level 6

Predicting volcanic eruptions is never easy. For centuries, volcanologists and seismologists have studied the activity beneath Earth that might indicate an eruption. Forecasting when a volcano might erupt has been somewhat unreliable. However, scientists from NASA and the Smithsonian Institution say they are a step closer to providing more accurate forecasts of when a volcano might blow. NASA used images from space to detect changes in the colour of leaves. The research was based on a 2019 study from McGill University. This study showed that an increase in carbon dioxide levels emitted by two active volcanoes in Costa Rica had an impact on the colour of leaves in the surrounding areas.

Current methods of predicting an imminent volcanic explosion include checking seismic activity, changes in ground height, and carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide emissions. NASA said the new method of monitoring changes in the colour of foliage from space could help in foretelling eruptions. The science behind this is fairly straightforward. As magma moves upwards through Earth's crust, it releases carbon dioxide. Trees absorb this and their leaves become greener and more vibrant. The LiveScience website said: "These signs can help to protect communities against the worst effects of volcanic blasts, including lava flows, ejected rocks, ashfalls, mudslides, and toxic gas clouds."