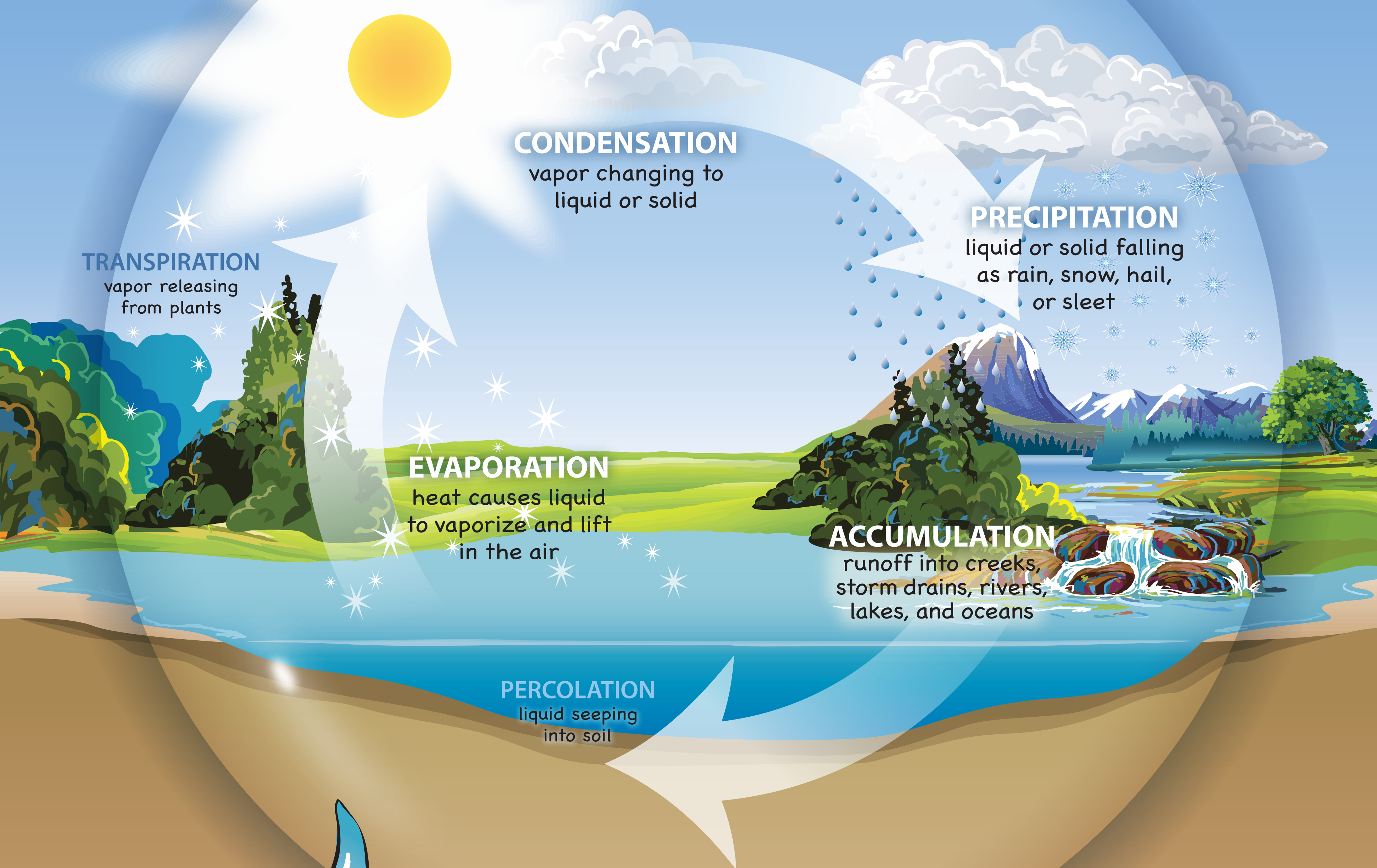


THE Water Cycle



Where do you think the last raindrops you saw traveled from?



Water's Magical Travels

Did you know, all of the water on the Earth is all that has ever been here? The water that exists never disappears and **no** new water is **ever** created. Like a magician's trick, water travels around the world through a process called The Water Cycle in three physical states: liquid, solid, and vapor.

The Water Cycle has four main phases that occur over and over again - Precipitation, Accumulation, Evaporation, and Condensation. During precipitation, water falls from clouds to the earth as rain, snow, hail, or sleet. After it falls, the accumulation stage begins and the water flows to creeks, storm drains, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Some of the water percolates into the soil and accumulates underground in aquifers. Evaporation happens when the sun warms water molecules and causes them to rise up into the air as vapor. When vapor released into the air comes from plants it is called transpiration. Once high in the air, the water molecules eventually cool down and condense into new clouds that start the process all over again.

The Water Cycle can happen within a short time span or over very long periods. For example, morning dew on grass usually evaporates the same day, while water trapped in ice caps, glaciers, or aquifers can take thousands of years to move on to the next step.

