The Morton Arboretum "Plant Investigations" Vocabulary List

To maximize the effectiveness of your "Plant Investigations" outreach program from The Morton Arboretum, please familiarize your students with the following vocabulary words. This will be most effective just before the program.

Adaptation – the slow process of change in the physical or behavioral traits of a plant or animal due to some change in its environment

Cotelydon – the first leaf or one of the first pair of leaves developed by a seed plant

Decomposer – an animal or plant that digests and breaks down dead material, converting it to a nutrient for other plants or animals

Dissection – to take apart a plant or animal to study its individual parts

Ecosystem – a community of living (biotic) organisms and non-living (abiotic) environmental factors working together as a unit

Embryo – a living thing in its earliest stage of development

Germination – the process where a seed sprout pushes through the soil to reach air and light

Life Cycle – the phases, stages, or changes through which a plant or animal passes during its lifetime

Pollination – the process where the pollen from the male part of a plant is transferred to the female part of another plant

Producer – a plant that produces its own food from light energy, some of which will be passed through the food web when the plant is eaten or decomposes

Seed Coat – the protective outer covering of a seed

Seed Dispersal – a natural process where plant seeds are spread to other areas (for example by wind, water, animal transport or consumption)

Plant Parts:

- Flower – reproductive part of a plant—it usually has both male and female parts

- Fruit – the part of a flowering plant that contains the seeds

- Leaf – the (usually) flat and green outgrowth of a plant stem

- Root – the underground part of a plant that absorbs water and nutrients from the soil and holds the plant in place

- Stem – the middle (or axis) of a plant—can be above or below ground

- Trunk – the main stem of a tree that supports the crown (tree top)