

GLOSSARY

Alga	A green plant that uses nutrients and sunlight to make food. The plural is algae (say “al-gee”).
Bacteria	A single celled organism that is often a parasite or saprophyte and is invisible to the naked eye.
Bird’s Nest Fern	A type of epiphyte that grows on rainforest trees. Also called “Crow’s Nest Fern.”
Buttress	Root shape like a large triangular plank at the base of a tall tree.
Canopy	Almost continuous layer of leaves and branches, which forms a roof over the rainforest.
Carnivore	An animal eater.
Consumer	Plant or animal that eats other plants or animals.
Crow’s Nest Fern	See “Bird’s Nest Fern.
Decomposer	Plant or animal that breaks down dead plants or animals.
Drip-tip	Special shape of a leaf tip on a rainforest leaf that helps remove the water from the leaf.
Elkhorn Fern	A type of epiphyte that grows on another plant, but does not harm it.
Evaporation	The conversion of water from a liquid to a gas helped by sunlight energy.
Fauna	The animals of a particular place.
Fern	An ancient type of plant that grows on the rainforest floor or as an epiphyte. It reproduces from tiny spores under the fronds.
Fig	A rainforest tree that produces fruit eaten by birds. (A Strangler Fig grows roots that strangle the tree it is living on.)
Flagella	Whip-like stems with hooks to grasp other plants.
Flora	The plants of a particular place.
Foliage	Name given to all the leaves of a tree.
Frond	The “leaf” of a fern.
Fungus	A kind of plant that helps decompose dead plant material, eg: Bracket Fungus, Mushroom. (Plural: fungi)
Girth	The distance around the trunk of a tree. (Circumference).
Ground Water	Water that is contained in soil and rocks just under the Earth’s surface.
Herbivore	A plant eater.
Host	A plant or animal that supports a parasite or epiphyte.

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Humus	The dark material on top of the soil resulting from the decay of leaf litter.
Insect	An animal with six legs.
Lawyer Vine	An epiphytic palm that grows up the trunks of trees. See “Wait-A-While”.
Leaf Litter	The layer of leaves that covers the forest floor.
Leaf Mould	A type of fungus that grows on dead leaves.
Lenticel	Breathing pore on the trunk or roots of a rainforest tree. Some of these look like little pimples on the trunk.
Liana (or Liane)	A woody vine that grows in the rainforest, often wrapped around or hanging from trees.
Lichen (say “LIE-ken”)	A type of plant growth that consists of an alga and a fungus that live together in a symbiotic relationship. They are many different colours and textures.
Life Cycle	The course of life of a plant or animal. Usually includes periods of youth, maturity and old age.
Moss	A type of plant that grows on the trunks of trees, dead logs and most places where it is moist and shady. Usually a green in colour.
Nutrients	Food, especially simple matter such as minerals.
Omnivore	An eater of both animals and plants.
Orchid	An epiphyte that usually produces spectacular flowers.
Organism	Any plant or animal.
Parasite	An organism that obtains its food from another living organism.
Precipitation	Ways in which water falls to the Earth eg: rain, hail, snow, mist, fog.
Predator	An organism that actively catches animals for food.
Producer	An organism that produces its own food.
Saprophyte	A plant that lives on decaying materials, eg: fungus
Surface Runoff	Water that does not soak into the soil, but flows across the surface.
Symbiosis	A close relationship between two living things. See “Lichen”.
Tendrils	Curly shaped extensions with which climbing plants can attach themselves to trees.
Transpiration	The conversion of water into vapour from plant leaves.
Wait-A-While	A plant that has hooks on long stems that create a hazard when you walk through the forest by hooking onto your clothing as if to say, “Wait a while” while you unhook yourself. See “Lawyer Vine”.
Water Table	The level of water that is contained below the Earth’s surface.