Plant Life

A Cultural Journey
Cultural Soil

- Culture is the total way of life of a group of people (e.g., group habits)
- Patterns and habits consciously and unconsciously absorbed from childhood on up.
- Assumptions about “the ways things should be done” and “the way people should act.”
- Subject to change and often varies within a group.
Soil Qualities in the US

- Personal Space
- Family relations. Parents and Children, Parents and Grandparents, extended Family.
- Community
- Relationships to and attitudes towards authority (Teachers, Police, the military)
- Language
Personal Space

- Keep an arm length between you and the person you are speaking with.
  - You don’t want to make them feel like you are violating their space.
Community

- United States: Emphasis on the individual, individual achievement and self-fulfillment.
- Other countries: Emphasis on the group and its priorities and goals.
Dealing with Cultural Shock

- Physical: Need proper diet, rest, exercise, vitamins, etc.
  - Freshman 15 is a common term used in the United States; meaning many 1st year college students gain 15 lbs (7 kilos)
- Mental and Emotional: Need the warmth of new relationships
- Spiritual: Need to renew yourself, your goals and purpose.
Thriving in New Soil

- Realize that everyone will experience some culture shock in some area of their life in the US.
- Be realistic in your expectations.
- Be self aware (keep a journal).
- Keep your sense of humor.
Facing Change

- Change will happen—give and take!
- Change can be negative or positive.
The Challenge of Change

- Be committed to the truth, the best of your home country, and the best of the US.
- Become inter-cultural!
Conclusion: Plant and Soil

- Remember this analogy and apply it to your life and studies in the U.S.
- As you grow, use your experience to break the walls and limitations of your “cultural pot”
- Help create an “intercultural garden.”