

What helps plants and animals flourish?

Lesson at a glance

Open with a healthy plant beside a thirsty, droopy one and invite Junior/Senior Infants to notice colour, leaves and soil. Echo roots on the plant diagram interactive, then tease what a robin needs outdoors. As a whole class, sort eight helper picture cards onto a wall chart under Helps them flourish / Does not help, linking the water card back to the two plants. Children draw helpers and one non-helper in the Investigation Journal, then share needs and people who help in a short display-only talk.

Learning objectives

- Notice the difference between a healthy plant and a thirsty plant
- Sort helper cards into things that help living things flourish and things that do not
- Name water, food, sunshine or shelter as something living things outdoors need

Before the bell – prep

Two to three days ahead, leave one potted plant unwatered so leaves droop and soil dries; water the other as usual. Same-day fallback: a wilted cutting or a clear photo pair beside one real healthy plant. Print helper and garden-animal cards, clear wall space for two headings, and print the Investigation Journal page.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
healthy potted plant	1	class	classroom	a sturdy cutting in a jar of water that has been kept in light
thirsty potted plant (left unwatered)	1	class	classroom	the same plant type shown after a dry spell, or a clear photo of a wilted plant next to a real healthy plant
garden-animal picture cards (robin, hedgehog, frog, worm)	1	class	classroom	simple drawn animal pictures on scrap card using the step 2 card texts
helper picture cards (water, sunshine, food, shelter, dry soil, dark cupboard, nowhere safe to rest, rubbish)	1	class	classroom	simple drawn helper pictures on scrap card using the step 3 card texts
wall or noticeboard space for the flourish chart	1	class	classroom	two labelled trays on a table as the two groups
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	a folded page with two sides labelled helps / does not help for drawing

Safety watch-point

Wash hands after anyone touches the plants; wipe the tray. Supervise any soil contact from the thirsty pot.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Set both plants side by side on a tray. Do not name water yet. Ask what looks different and what they wonder about the floppy one; take colour, leaves and dry soil only.
- **Looking at plants and animals:** Drive the finished plant diagram on the IWB once — class echoes roots, stem, leaf, flower, then stop on roots as the part that drinks. Return to the real plants for unhurried observations (firm green vs floppy dry). Show the robin card and ask what it might need outdoors; flash one more animal card only if time allows.
- **Sorting what helps them grow strong:** Pin Helps them flourish and Does not help with the plain flourish phrase visible. Hold each card so all can see; children call the side and one short reason while you pin. After a few cards, glance at the plants: which had water? Expected sort A–D help, E–H do not. If Card G goes under Helps for rain, revoice: drink water helps; nowhere safe to hide does not.
- **Show and draw:** Keep the wall chart as the shared answer key. Sequence aloud: draw one or two helpers (~3 min), one does-not-help (~2 min), pencils down, tell a partner one need (~2 min). Circulate so each child names one helper; welcome simple labels but do not push a full set of four.
- **Make-sense talk:** Beat 1: name needs only from the chart and point back at the two plants. Beat 2: give gardener and farmer first, then ask who else helps (pets, school garden). Close with the shared sentence on water, food, sunshine and shelter to flourish. Wash hands after plant touch.

What it should show

Children notice the healthy plant is firm and green with moister soil and the thirsty one is floppy with dry soil. Sort water, sunshine, food and shelter under Helps; dry soil, dark cupboard, nowhere safe and rubbish under Does not help. Journal pages show at least one helper drawing and one does-not-help drawing matched to the chart, not a private invent.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Plants eat food the same way animals do.** — Gently say plants use sunshine, water and air to make their own food in their leaves; animals eat food they find. Point to the sunshine and food helper cards to keep the two paths clear.
- **Card G (cold wind and rain, no nest) goes under Helps because rain is water.** — Reply: water to drink helps; being stuck outside with nowhere to hide does not. Point to the missing nest or burrow on the card and move it under Does not help together.
- **Sunshine is only for plants, so animals do not need anything from the sun side of the chart.** — Keep it light: sunshine helps plants make food and grow green; it can warm animals too, but animals still need food they find and a safe place to rest.



Lesson 9

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Let the child point to a card or plant and say one word (water, sun, food, nest) while you pin or scribe the side. • Accept a minimal journal page: one help drawing plus one does-not-help drawing copied from the wall chart.	• Prompt a short reason when sorting or partner-talking: It helps because... • Ask them to name which real plant matches the water card.	• Invite a second helper or a why for a does-not-help card using only the chart pictures. • Ask who in their family or school garden helps living things get water, food or shelter.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to the school garden or a local hedge walk — spot a puddle, sunny leaf or bird nest that helps living things.

