

living-things

What plants and animals need outdoors

Lesson at a glance

Hold up the class potted plant and invite quick guesses about what it needs to keep growing. Talk through roots drinking water, leaves making food with light, and the pot as a safe place, then wonder aloud over robin and snail photo cards. Name the three needs cards together and ask the same three questions for plant, robin and snail. Children help pin water, food and safe-place cards under Plant, Robin and Snail on a wall strip to build the lasting class needs chart.

Learning objectives

- Name water, food and a safe place as things plants and animals need
- Help build a class picture chart of what living things outdoors need

Before the bell – prep

Place one potted plant where all can see. Print the robin and snail photo cards, three full sets of needs picture cards (water, food, safe place) and Plant/Robin/Snail heading pictures. Clear a small noticeboard strip — the pinned cards are the chart; no large sheet needed.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
small potted plant (flowering if possible)	1	class	classroom	a pot of grass, herbs, or a leafy cutting in a jar of water
garden-animal photo cards (robin, snail)	1	class	provided printable	simple drawings of a robin and a snail on card
needs picture cards (water, food, safe place)	9	class	provided printable	nine sticky notes with simple water-drop, leaf and nest sketches (three of each)
heading pictures for the wall chart (plant, robin, snail)	1	class	provided printable	three sticky labels written Plant, Robin, Snail
sticky tack or pins for the noticeboard	1	class	classroom	masking tape loops

**Safety watch-point**

Do not taste the plant; gentle hands only on the pot; wash hands after any touch of soil.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Hold the pot high so everyone sees it. Invite two or three quick guesses only — do not name water, food or safe place yet. Every guess is welcome; keep the key question open: what does a living thing outdoors need so it can live and grow?
- **Looking at our plant:** Kneel with the real pot in your hands, not the board diagram. Point to the soil for roots drinking, tilt a leaf toward the window light, and pat the pot as its home. Ask only 'Which part drinks the water?' Avoid a full roots-stem-leaf-flower drill — this beat is about needs, not plant parts.
- **Look and wonder:** Show the pot, then the robin card, then the snail card. Keep talk short: children point and say one thing they notice. Prompt gently — where might the robin find a drink or snack; where might the snail rest or hide — then move on; the three needs are named properly next.
- **What do they need?:** Whole class on the carpet with one shared set of three needs cards. First chorally name water, food and safe place until the words stick. Then run plant, robin and snail in short three-minute bursts with the same three questions, pausing for pointing. For the plant, revoice any 'eats soil' idea: leaves make food with light. Prompt safe place with 'Where does it sleep or hide?'
- **Our needs chart:** Pin Plant, Robin and Snail headings on the wall strip. Children help place one water, food and safe-place card under each living thing using all three printed sets so the chart can stay up. Keep the gardener mime short — water the pot and turn it to the light — and one gentle line that people help look after animals; do not send wild robins to the vet.
- **Make-sense and tidy:** Point at the wall chart and revoice the three needs. Class shows one, two, three fingers as you name water, food and safe place. Plant back on a safe shelf; leave the chart displayed if you can; wash hands if anyone touched soil.

What it should show

Most children will name or point to water and food first; safe place often needs the sleep/hide prompt. For the plant expect roots drink water, leaves make food with light, pot soil is the safe place. Robin: puddles, bugs/worms, nest in a hedge. Snail: damp places, soft leaves, under a stone or leaf. Affirm any extra idea, then steer back to the three needs on the chart.



Misconceptions & interventions

- **Children say the plant eats soil or munches lunch the way animals do.** — Gently revoice while pointing at a real leaf and the food card: plants do not eat like us — roots drink water and leaves make food using light from the window.
- **Children name only food and water and skip a safe place.** — Ask ‘Where does it sleep or hide?’ and hold up the safe-place card — nest in a hedge, under a stone, or soil in the pot — then let them point and pin it.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Let the child point to a needs card while you voice the full sentence for them. • Keep them beside you at the pot so they can touch-point soil, leaf and pot as you name each need.	• After they name a need, ask one short follow-up: ‘Where does the robin find that outdoors?’	• Invite one extra idea when pinning the chart, such as where a robin might hide when it rains, still tied to water, food or safe place.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to Aistear/oral language: children chorally name the three needs and help build a shared class display of Irish garden wildlife.