

living-things

What helps plants and animals flourish?

Lesson at a glance

Open with two real plants side by side — one watered and green, one left thirsty — and ask what children notice and wonder. After a quick look at roots and a robin card, the class sorts helper picture cards onto a wall chart under Helps them flourish and Does not help. Children then draw one helpful and one unhelpful action on the Investigation Journal page and share with a partner. Close with a short make-sense talk naming water, food, sunshine and shelter.

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 plant unwatered so leaves droop and soil dries; water the other as usual. Same day: print helper and garden-animal cards, clear wall space for the two-heading chart, and photocopy the Investigation Journal page. Fallback: a clear photo pair of healthy vs wilted plant beside one real plant.

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	provided printable	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	provided printable	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	provided printable	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 before packing away.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Set the two plants on a tray at the front. Do not name water or helpers yet. Take two or three quick notices — colour, floppy leaves, dry soil — and one wonder about the floppy plant, then move on.
- **Looking at plants and animals:** Spend unhurried whole-class time on the plant contrast so every child sees firm green leaves versus droop and dry soil. Point once to roots and say plants drink water through their roots; class echoes roots. Hold up the robin card and ask what it might need outdoors — accept food, water, nest, warmth without sorting yet.
- **Sorting what helps them flourish:** Pin Helps them flourish and Does not help with the plain phrase grow strong and stay healthy visible. Hold one helper card at a time; children call the side and a short reason, then you place it. After a few cards, glance back at the plants: which had water? Link the thirsty plant to the water card. If a card lands wrong, ask the class why and move it together.
- **What could you do?:** Seven minutes, two small drawings — something they could do to help, and something that would not help. Leave the chart up as a support, but do not ask them to copy cards. Circulate and ask one child in three to name their picture aloud before partner talk.
- **Make-sense talk:** First take needs only from the chart. Then give the lead-in yourself: a gardener waters plants; a farmer feeds animals. Only then ask who else helps. End with the shared sentence: Living things need water, food, sunshine and shelter to flourish.

What it should show

Children notice the watered plant is firm and green and the thirsty one is floppy with dry soil. Helper sort: water, sunshine, food and shelter under Helps; dry soil, dark cupboard, nowhere safe, and rubbish under Does not help. Journal drawings typically show watering, bird food, or picking up litter, and everyday unhelpful acts such as forgetting to water or standing on plants.

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. Keep it to one line and move on.
- **Nowhere safe to rest 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.
- **When asked who helps living things, children only name adults and skip the needs.** — Keep the talk in order: needs from the chart first, then your gardener and farmer examples, then who else — so need-words are secure before people.



Lesson 9

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Invite pointing and a single word — water, sun, food, nest — when calling the sort side. • Let a stuck drawer lean on the wall chart and copy one clear helper idea into their own life.	• Ask for a short reason on each card: It helps because... • During partner talk, prompt them to name which need their drawing gives.	• Ask why the thirsty plant links to the water card using roots in their own words. • Stretch the who-helps talk to a concrete home or school-garden example they can describe.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to Aistear care routines and the school garden — watering, bird feeders, and keeping litter off Irish hedges and yards.

