



Plants & Animals! Prep Science at Home

You can help! Your child notices plants and animals every day. You can help them look more closely and talk about what they see!

Why are we learning this? Country is full of living things

Up here in the north, we are surrounded by some of the most amazing plants and animals in the world. First Nations families have always had deep knowledge of the living things on Country — which plants are food, which animals come in the wet season, and how to tell them apart by looking closely at their features. Learning to observe, describe and sort living things is a skill your child will use every day, and it connects their classroom science to the Country they already know and love.

My child will learn to:

✓ Spot external features

See and name the parts on the outside of a plant or animal — like leaves, fur, fins or feathers.

✓ Describe what they see

Use words to tell you about what an animal or plant looks like on the outside.

✓ Sort into groups

Put plants or animals into groups that are the same in some way — like all the ones with fur together.

✓ Explain their grouping

Tell you WHY they put things in a group — "These all have feathers" or "These all have leaves".

Big ideas to know:

External features

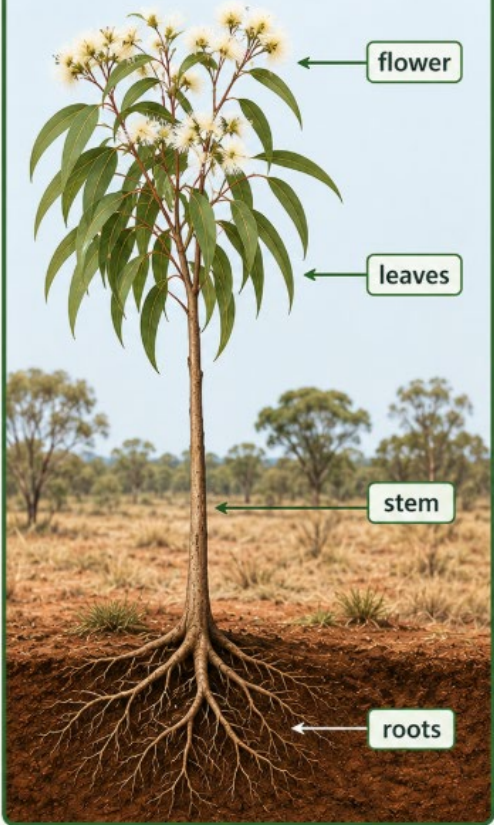
These are the parts of a living thing you can SEE on the outside. A plant's leaves, stem and roots are its features. An animal's fur, fins or feathers are its features.

Plants

Plants are living things that grow in the ground. They have roots (underground), a stem, leaves and sometimes flowers or fruit.

Animals

Animals are living things that move around. They can be covered in fur (kangaroo), feathers (bird), scales (fish or lizard) or smooth skin (frog).

Parts of a Plant  flower leaves stem roots	FUR  e.g. kangaroo	FEATHERS  e.g. kookaburra
	SCALES  e.g. freshwater turtle	LEGS  e.g. grasshopper



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Ways to sort living things:

Sort by...	What to look for	Examples
Body covering	What is the animal's outside made of? Fur, feathers, scales or smooth skin?	<i>Dog → fur. Magpie → feathers. Barramundi → scales. Frog → smooth skin.</i>
Number of legs	How many legs does it have? Count them!	<i>Cat → 4 legs. Ant → 6 legs. Spider → 8 legs. Snake → no legs. Bird → 2 legs.</i>
Plant features	Does it have flowers? What colour? How many leaves? Are the leaves big or small?	<i>Sort leaves by size or shape. Group flowers by colour.</i>
Where it lives	Does it live in water, on land, or in a tree?	<i>Fish → water. Kangaroo → land. Possum → trees. Crocodile → both!</i>

Think Like a Scientist — Nature Sort

Go outside together and find 5 living things — plants or animals. They can be real things you find, or pictures you draw. Then sort them into groups. There is no wrong answer — whatever makes sense to your child!

Ask: "Why did you put those ones together?" The explaining is the science!

Things to look for outside:

-  A leaf — what shape is it?
-  An ant or insect — how many legs?
-  A lizard or bird — what covers its body?
-  A flower — what colour? How many petals?
-  A tree — can you see the trunk, leaves and roots?

Questions to ask your child

- Is that a plant or an animal? How do you know?
 - What can you see on the outside of that animal? (fur, feathers, scales, skin?)
 - How many legs does it have? Can you count them?
 - Can you find two animals that are the same in some way?
 - What parts can you see on that plant? (roots, stem, leaves, flower?)
 - Can you sort these into two groups? How did you sort them?
 - What is different about a bird and a fish?
- Tip: there are no wrong answers — your child is learning to look closely and use words to describe what they see.*

Key words to know:

External features	The parts of a living thing you can see on the outside
Plant	A living thing that grows in the ground and makes its own food from sunlight
Animal	A living thing that moves around and eats food to survive
Group / Sort	To put things together that are the same in some way
Fur	Thick soft hair covering found on some animals like dogs, kangaroos and possums
Feathers	The covering found on birds
Scales	Small, flat plates that cover fish, lizards and snakes
Observe	To look very carefully and notice all the details

Key words to look up

External features · Plant · Animal · Sort · Fur · Feathers · Scales · Observe

What school will check

Your child needs to group plants and animals into sets based on features they can see on the outside.

Try it at home!

Collect 5 different leaves from outside. Can your child sort them into groups? Talk about what makes each group the same.