

Lesson 1: **Love Your Living Landscape**

Essential Question: How do living landscapes benefit the environment where you live?

Materials: Student Worksheet A: “It’s Alive!,” plastic magnifying glasses, paper, pencils, crayons

Time Recommended: 45 minutes

Engage: Your Neighborhood’s Landscape

1. **Tell** students to close their eyes and picture walking around their community. Narrate their journey by asking: *Are there farms, fields, trees, homes, buildings, parks, shopping centers, streets, or parking lots?* Discuss what students saw as a class.
2. **Point out** how some things students saw on their imaginary walk were alive, such as trees and lawns. They’re part of their neighborhood’s **living landscape**. Explain that students likely also saw paved roads and sidewalks, as well as areas covered with gravel, concrete, rocks, dirt, sand, or artificial plastic grass. These features make up their neighborhood’s **nonliving landscape**.
3. **Discuss** how some people think nonliving landscapes are good for the environment because they don’t need resources, such as water, to maintain them. Other people think living landscapes provide more benefits. That’s because plants help remove pollution from water and the air and keep areas cooler than bare soil or concrete does. Their roots also help prevent erosion by holding soil in place so it doesn’t wash away.
4. **Hand out** a copy of Student Worksheet A: “It’s Alive!” to each student. As a class, identify features of living and nonliving landscapes. Then have students use these elements to design their own living landscape on a separate sheet of paper.

Explore: A World Beneath Your Feet

5. **Explain** that another benefit of plant-filled green spaces is that they provide **habitats**, or natural homes, for many different creatures.
6. **Take** students outside to explore a real-life living landscape near your school and see what organisms live there. If possible, provide each student with a small magnifying glass to examine the landscape up close.
7. **Have** students draw the types of plants and animals they observe. Discuss the number and variety of plants and animals students discover.

Explain: Aiding the Environment

8. **State** that living landscapes play another valuable role in the community—they help protect against extreme weather, such as **droughts** (long periods with little rainfall) and intense storms. For example, plants can slow down and capture moving water after heavy rains to prevent flooding.
9. **Encourage** students to think critically about what they’ve learned about living landscapes by asking: *How could living landscapes benefit your community?*

Name _____

IT'S ALIVE!

HEY THERE, IT'S TURFMUTT! Living landscapes contain grass, trees, and other plants that help protect the planet. Just like me and Water Warrior, they stand up against powerful bad guys out to harm the environment. Learn the difference between living and nonliving landscapes so you too can become a backyard superhero and stop eco-villains.



KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

1. Draw a green circle around parts of the town's living landscape: trees, grass, bushes, and gardens.
2. Draw a red circle around parts of the town's nonliving landscape: paved streets, sidewalks, and parking lots.

