

# HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

## Investigation 4: Heating Earth

Whales are the biggest animals alive on Earth today. They need a lot to eat. Many whales are filter feeders and rely on tiny, floating crustaceans called krill as the main part of their diet. A blue whale can eat over 3,636 kilograms of krill a day. The krill depend on tinier marine plants for their food. And the plants depend on sunshine for their survival. So if you think carefully, whales depend on a whole lot of sunshine for their survival!

### How Many Sun Days Do You Use?

Plants depend on solar energy for their survival. They use the Sun’s energy to make food and store the energy in their leaves, seeds, and fruit. When an animal, like you, eats the fruit from a plant or tree, you are eating this stored solar energy. Plants need different amounts of time in the sunshine to produce the fruits and vegetables we use for food. You might think of it this way: one day of sunshine used and stored by a plant equals one “sun day.” For example, it can take up to 73 days for corn to grow from a seed to the stage when you can eat it off the cob. You are using 73 days of stored solar energy in the corn when you eat it.

Find out how many sun days it takes to ripen your favorite fruits and vegetables.

- Write down your favorite fruits and vegetables in the chart below.
- To find the number of sun days for each food, read seed packets or a seed catalog. Some seed catalogs are available on the Internet, or you might try the library or a garden-supply store. For the cereal, find out what type of grain your cereal is made of (for example, oats or corn).

Type of food	Your favorite	Number of sun days
Example	Corn	73
Vegetable		
Fruit		
Cereal		