

# 30 Simple Garden-Based Activities



## Plant Yoga

Stretch the way plants grow! Seed → Roots → Stem → Leaves → Flower → Fruit → Seed!

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## Sit Spots (with Journaling)

Everyone finds a spot in the garden and returns there during every session for regular writing/ reflection time.

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## Color Search

Using pre-made materials (ex. paint chips from hardware stores), invite students to find something in the garden that matches their paint chip.

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## Close-Up Observation

Set-up magnifying glasses. Invite students to complete observational drawings. (Hula hoops make great observation boundaries.)

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## Garden Haikus

Invite students to choose something growing in the garden and write a story/haiku about their choice.

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## Dig Boxes or Digging Pits

Dedicated space for digging that allows for messy exploration without disrupting planted spaces.

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## Zen Paintings

Utilize a chalkboard in the garden, set-up paint brushes and water for simple zen paintings that disappear when they dry.

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## Tree or Plant Tag

Introduce the kids to 2-3 plants/ trees in the garden. Have 1-3 kids be "it." Yell out the name of a plant. If they get tagged before the touch the plant, or are touching the wrong plant and get tagged, they become it.

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## Word Art

Choose something growing in the garden. Ask students to use their five senses to list descriptive words about their chosen object. Using these words as lines, invite students to create a picture.

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## Seed or Plant Portraits

Collect grass, leaves, seeds, woodchips, flower petals, and use glue to make a self portrait using the natural materials.

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## Soil Soup

Hunt for the ingredients of "healthy soil": minerals (rocks), organic matter (things that used to be alive like dead leaves or compost), water, and air. Mix together in bucket as if it were soup. Now set the timer for 100 years!

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## Dirt-shakes

Fill a jar halfway with soil from the garden and then add water to fill the rest of the way. Lid and shake. Soil particles (clay, silt, sand) in the jar will separate to form bands after resting for 30-60 minutes.

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## Garden Work

It may seem obvious but sometimes we overlook the power of garden work to reinforce learning, engage students physically, and grow garden stewards! Some examples include mulching trees with wood chips, weeding (and exploring roots), adding compost to garden soil around plants, mulching with straw around plant and watering.

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## 6 of 1, Half Dozen of Another

Write opposing adjectives on the bottom of egg cartons (ex. Smooth / Rough, Green / Brown, Narrow / Broad, etc). Give pairs or groups of students a carton and time to hunt for items in the garden that fit those descriptive words. Groups may pick 6 different items that fit each word and place each in a corresponding egg cup. Re-group and see if others can guess the words.

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## Bird's Eye View

Select an area of the garden to draw "from above" as if they were birds. This is a good introduction to mapping.

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## Paintbrush Pollinating

Role play pollinators by inviting students to use paint brushes to move pollen from flowers of the same type (ex strawberry flowers, kale flowers, zinnias).

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## Herbal Sun Teas

Harvest herbs (mints work great) from the garden and after rinsing, add to large jar or pitcher. Leave in sunny window for up to a day, add ice and enjoy!

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## Seed Saving

Look for dried tops of plants or dead flower heads. Pick into brown paper bags by type. Label and date for planting next season.

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## Seed Sorting

Collect old seeds or visit the grocery for some various beans. From mixture of seeds, invite students to sort or categorize along a binary (small to large, flat to round, etc). Older students can categorize by calories, protein, fat contained within the seeds with a reference sheet.

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## Sensory Explorations

Use your 5 sense to make observations in your garden, find plants that have unique qualities to touch (lamb's ear), smell (lemon balm), taste (sorrel), hear (dried bean pods)....

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## Bug Jars

With mason jars, mason jar bands, and squares of window screen or other mesh, invite students to each catch one bug in the garden. We typically ask students not to go after moths and butterflies since their wings are so delicate. Great for observational drawings or "Word Art."

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## Ant's Eye View

Laying a piece of string on the ground, ask students to imagine what the garden would look like if they were an ant walking along the path of the string. Draw the ant's perspective.

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## Weather Observation Station

With simple tools, including a thermometer, rain gauge, and cloud viewer (<https://bit.ly/2MWpUI1>) have students record weather data in a log book.

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## Naturalist Station

Set-up guidebooks where students can choose topics (flowers, trees, birds, beetles, etc) and identify species present in the Mid-Atlantic region.

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## Seed Tape

Helpful for small seeds! Use strips of toilet paper and a ruler to glue seeds in a row and the correct distance. Then plant your seed tape in the garden.

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## Measurements Station

With rulers, measuring tape, string, etc. for children to measure plant growth. Can be graphed, utilized for science fair experiments, etc.

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## Self-Guided Garden Walk

Set-up directional signage around the garden allowing students to observe, interact, and appreciate the garden. Signs can be placed in laminated sleeves and reused.

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## Seed Necklaces

Give students a small Ziplock bag (or smaller bead bag), a few dried bean seeds, a cotton ball, bowl of water, hole punch and string. Have them put a few seeds in their bag with a couple wet cotton balls and make a seed necklace with the string. Students can hang their necklaces in the classroom or wear them to keep them warm enough to germinate.

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## Worm Bin

Start a worm bin in your classroom to teach about invertebrates and their role in decomposition. <https://bit.ly/2KRbPrH>

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## Pollination Game

Use baskets as flowers and yellow balls for pollen. Form a relay race where students carry the "pollen" between their knees to pollinate the flowers. Many variations possible!

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