30 Simple Garden-Based Activities

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

Sit Spots (with Journaling)
Everyone finds a spot in the garden and returns there during every session for regular writing/reflection time.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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!

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.

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.

Sensory Explorations
Use your 5 senses to make observations in your garden, find plants that have unique qualities to touch (lambs ear), smell (lemon balm), taste (sorrel), hear (dried bean pods)....

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."

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.

Weather Observation Station
With simple tools, including a thermometer, rain gauge, and cloud viewer (https://bit.ly/2MWpU11) have students record weather data in a log book.

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

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.

Worm Bin

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!