

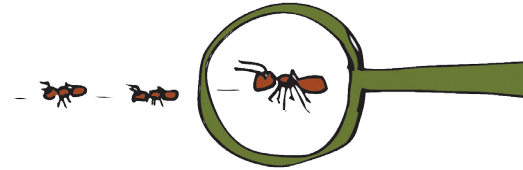
Go Outside and Get Growing!

Fun and Simple Gardening and Nature Activities



Garden Grazing

There are so many tasty and delightful treats to be tasted in the garden. Find an adult and go on a taste test adventure, sampling incredible edibles, from sweet to spicy herbs, pungent and potent veggies or sour and strange flowers. Download a [garden grazing guide](#) to help navigate your gastronomical journey.



Scavenger Hunt

There is no better way to discover the secrets of a garden than by looking closely and observing small mysteries around every turn. Use our [scavenger hunt](#) or create one on your own. For young children, focus on colors or shapes in the garden or take different plant samples (leaves, pinecones, etc) or photographs and have them match them up.



Brew a spot of tea

There are many herbs that are easy to grow for a tea garden. Try growing chocolate mint, lemon balm, bee balm, chamomile, spearmint and lavender. Harvest a big handful of leaves and put them in a mason jar. Screw on the lid and let it sit in the sun for a few hours. Once the herbs have steeped (sat in the warm water for awhile), pour it over ice cubes and enjoy a refreshing spot of tea!



Slug Hut

Slug huts are secret forts that enable the imagination to roam wild. They are places for stories, for games, for daydreaming, for singing, and for relaxing. Find fallen branches and make the frame. I usually make a teepee shape (so easy and so sturdy). You might need to secure them together with a bit of twine or willow branches. Scout around for shrubbery that you could weave through your frame. You can be creative in your materials here—the more natural materials you use, the better you blend in and your slug hut is camouflaged. You can also use old bed sheets or tablecloths. Bring in your books, sketchpad, and play away!

Create a Fairy House

To entice faeries to come into your garden or backyard, you need to build a space that they will enjoy. You might want to make a house, a park, a place for tea, or a snack shop. Proper faery house making begins with collecting found materials in garden. Please do not pull living plant material to use—the faeries will get very upset! Use fallen leaves, stones, acorns, dead twigs, grass clippings, etc. Faery houses can be nestled in trees like a nest, underneath a scrubby bush, tucked amongst the toadstools, faeries can be quite happy anywhere.



Edible Flower Ice Cubes

For a marvelous addition to your favorite beverage, make flower ice cubes. Simply start with an empty ice cube tray and fill it with your favorite edible petals or flowers (nasturtium, pansies, begonias, calendula, monarda, mint, borage, etc). Gently cover with water and place it in the freezer. After a few hours, plunk the ice cubes into your glass and enjoy!

A Garden Fashion Show

The garden can be a great source for fashion, from snapdragon earrings or hairclips to dramatic necklaces made from daisies. Be creative and explore the joy that many plants give with simple projects that encourage imaginative play.

Maple leaf crown

Perfect in the fall with the amazing colors maple give forth (or really anytime through the year!). Collect a handful of maple leaves to begin with. Gently remove the petiole from the blade (the leaf stem from the main part of the leaf). The petiole will serve to “stitch” the leaves together. “Pin” the petiole through the blade, by poking one end of the petiole through the front face of the leaf, across the back and then bringing it back through the front of the leaf. Take the other end of the petiole and do the same thing with a second leaf. You will end up with two leaves “stitched” or “pinned” together. Continue until you have a crown! Encourage the youth to collect the leaves and an adult will likely have to assist younger gardeners with the construction. You can do this with a number of different trees including oaks, sycamores and others plants that have long petioles and sturdy leaves.



Daisy chains

To make a daisy chain, begin by selecting a few flowers with long stems. Towards the end of the stem of the first flower (about an inch from the bottom), make a small slit in the stem. Slip the stem of the second flower through the slit, pulling the flower through, until the flower head cannot pull through and forms the first link. Continue in the same way until you have a lovely necklace worthy for any garden tea party or faery and goblin dance party!

Make a grass whistle

A lot of plants are used to make musical instruments and there is none as the grass whistle! Take a big blade of grass (at least a ¼” wide) and tuck it smoothly between your thumbs. Press your thumbs next to each other so that your fingernails face you. Notice the little hole beneath your knuckle? Place that spot to your lips and blow through it. If your grass doesn’t whistle, adjust it a little or try a smaller or bigger piece of grass. What other plants can you use to create your garden orchestra?



Mud Pies.

Borrow one of mom or dad’s pie pans and gather some soil from the garden. You may need a trowel to dig deep into the earth to fill your pan. Add a little water, mix well, really, really well, keep mixing, making mud and more mud! What color is your mud pie? Can you find different soils to make different ‘flavors’ of mud pies? Any pebble toppings? Can you make multiple mud pies? Give them to your friends and neighbors. They will surely enjoy them.

Whisper secrets to snapdragons

Catch up on the latest garden gossip with your chatty companion, the snapdragon. They love to talk and tell stories, so gently pluck one off, squeeze the side of the flower and start sharing stories.

Hug a tree

So many trees, so many hugs to give. Read the Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein in a comfortable crook of your favorite tree. Take a bark rubbing and make a collection of rubbings. Is the bark smooth, rough, shiny, papery?

Plant Tasty Vegetables

There are all sorts of veggies with virtue to grow during the fall or spring season. Plant the following below and make your family a meal or a snack at harvest time. Download a veggie planting guide for a full season guide to growing in the **Coastal Plain/Piedmont** or the **Foothills/Mountains** from NC Cooperative Extension.

Directly sow these seeds in the garden:

- Spinach
- Kale
- Collards
- Carrots
- Beets
- Radish
- Turnips
- Kohlrabi
- Rutabaga
- Dill

Plant transplants (little seedlings) into the garden or a pot:

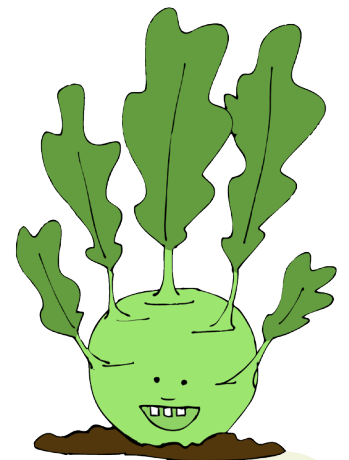
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Pac choi
- Lettuce
- Scallions
- Chard
- Pot up or plant Potatoes

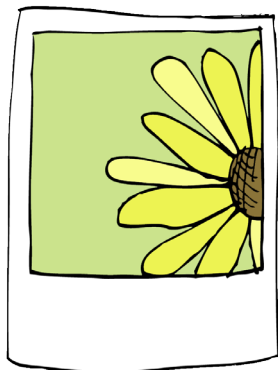
Find a story spot and tell tales of Jack

Jack in the beanstalk is a marvelous tale of an adventurous lad that plants magic beans, visits a castle, eludes a giant and generally creates mischief wherever he goes. Stories of Jack's other adventures are known as the "Jack Tales." Make up your own Jack tale and tell it to your family over the campfire.

Collect seeds

As the weather turns cooler and the daylength become shorter, many plants produce fruit with all sorts of seeds inside of them. The fall is a perfect time to collect seeds from vegetables, trees and wildflowers. Take small envelopes or paper bags and look for fruits and seeds that have reached maturity. This means they have fully ripened and the seeds will be able to grow into new plants. Collect fruit that have recently dropped on the ground or have just turned brown and dried on the plant. Mature seeds are usually dark in color, firm and dry. Seeds that are green and moist are immature and not ready for collecting. Be sure to collect seeds that are not endangered or rare and ask an owner's permission if you are not collecting at your own house. Put the seeds in your bags or envelopes and be sure to label. Plant them next year and you will have a lovely garden.





Host a plant gallery

A good plant scientist is also a careful observer. Through careful observation you notice if plants have hairs, what color they are, how big, what the shape of the flowers, if they twist and climb or ramble and sprawl. Try to capture all your observation in a drawing of your favorite plant. Have your friends draw and paint a picture of their favorite plant. Host a neighborhood art show and invite parents and neighbors in to see your work. Serve lavender lemonade with edible flower ice cubes. Tell your visitors what is special about your plant and encourage them to go home and paint a picture of their favorite plant.

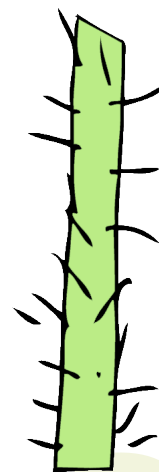
Investigate insects

The garden provides a perfect habitat for many insects. Take a journal and find a spot in the garden where you can carefully observe around you. Look for insects munching on plants, pollinating flowers, crawling in the earth beneath you or zinging through the air. How many can you observe? Sketch them carefully and note their colors, size, what they are doing and how many you see. Do this throughout the year. Does the type of insect change? Do their numbers? Write down any ideas and observations you have.

Stalk Strange Stems

There are some might strange stems in this world. Take yourself and a buddy on a stem safari and find stems that behave in the following weird ways:

- Stems that suction themselves against a wall. These little friends have “sticky” pads that look like treefrog foot pads. Too cool.
- Stems that curl around something. Many stems have tendrils that can wrap something like a tree or a trellis in a big stem hug.
- The ramblers. These plants are born to roam and try to take over the garden as much as possible.
- Secret stemmers. Where is the stem on a dandelion? These plants don’t seem to have a stem, but look close, maybe it is underground or it is so very small you have to be a super stem sleuth to observe it.
- There are a lot of other interesting stems out there, stems with hairs, stems with spines, stems that are tall, stems that are square—keep a tally of your stem safari!



Cook from the Garden

There are so many delightful and nutritious treats that kids can easily make from the fruit and veggies they harvest from the garden! Trying making some healthful snacks from the list below:

- Kale Chips - harvest and wash kale leaves, toss with olive oil and a dash of kosher salt. Put on a baking sheet and cook for 10-15 minutes at 350F.
- Dried Strawberries - a tart and tasty snack! Slice strawberries and place on a dehydrator tray at 170F until dry. Place in plastic bag and store in the freezer, although they may be gone before you can put them away!
- Smoothie City: Find a blender or food processor and experiment! Super Sweets: Baked sweetpotatoes with orange juice and honey; Green Goodness: kale, yogurt, apples and bananas; Fruity Rooty: Carrots, strawberries, blueberries, mint and yogurt.