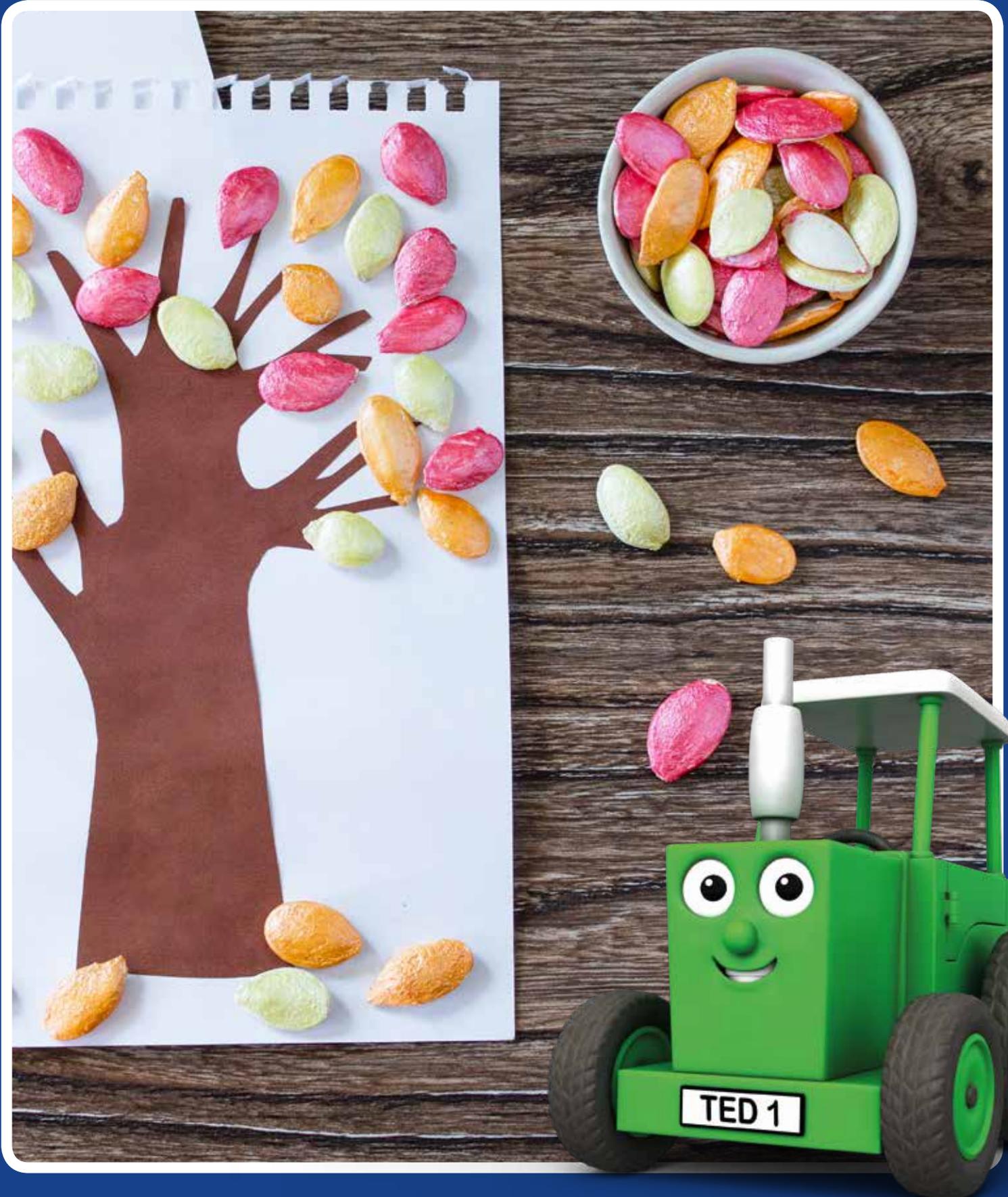




Rainbow Pumpkin Seeds



It's Autumntime down on the farm, and Tractor Ted is helping to harvest pumpkins. Pumpkins are full of flat, cream-coloured seeds. The seeds are easy to dye, and the rainbow colours make them a pretty and versatile resource for sensory exploration, craft and counting.

THIS ACTIVITY...

- helps children to explore, identify and name colours
- introduces shades of colour
- offers lots of opportunity for fine motor control and manipulation
- encourages children to sort and count
- introduces the concepts of similarity, difference and change
- allows children to explore sticking

WHAT TO DO

Rinse and dry the pumpkin seeds. Mix together 150ml of water, two tablespoons of white vinegar and a few drops of food colouring. Add some of the pumpkin seeds and stir them around to make sure they are well covered with liquid. Fish them out after half an hour and spread them on paper towels to dry. Make up separate batches for each colour to create a range of rainbow shades. Use your dyed pumpkin seeds in the following ways ...

- Put the seeds in the Tuff Spot tray for free sensory play and exploration.
- Provide spoons, jugs, scoops and funnels. Challenge the children to fill plastic water bottles with the seeds.
- Put blobs of white craft glue on card and place a seed on each blob to create a colourful mosaic collage.
- Pour white craft glue into plastic coffee tin lids and let the children drop in seeds to make a pretty little plaque.
- Mix the coloured seeds together in a shallow pot, give the children muffin trays and challenge them to sort the seeds into separate colours.
- Encourage older children to count the seeds. Make counting sticks by gluing single seeds onto lolly sticks, using a different colour for each stick.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Make sure the seeds are completely dry before using so that the colour doesn't come off on fingers or clothes. Leave them to dry overnight, or longer if necessary.
- Taking batches of seeds out of the dye at different times will create shades of colour (the longer the seeds are left to soak, the darker the colour). Varying the amount of food colouring will also give different shades.
- Help older children to sort seeds into light blue and dark blue, light green and dark green and so on. Put seeds of one colour in order from lightest to darkest.
- Compare undyed seeds with coloured seeds, and ask each child to choose their favourite colour. Give them a choice of coloured card as a background for their mosaic collage, and experiment with different colour combinations of background and seeds.
- Give the children cut out card shapes to decorate with coloured seeds. Try tree shapes (decorate with seeds in autumnal colours), pumpkin shapes (paint orange and decorate with natural coloured seeds), butterflies, rainbows, flowers and so on.



Double-check that pumpkin seeds are not an issue for children with nut allergies, and avoid completely if any children have seed allergies. Although pumpkin seeds are non-toxic, discourage children from tasting the seeds as they can be a choking hazard.

