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Rizpah A. Douglass

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Extension Circular 1178

September, 1936

Discard

How many on hand.

Paul

Decorative Objects One Can Make



Desk set made from tin cans.

The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

*"True joy lies in the creating of things, not
in the possessing of them. For in the possessing
of them lies slavery, while in creating there is
the breath of freedom."—CONFUCIUS.*

Decorative Objects One Can Make

RIZPAH A. DOUGLASS

TO CREATE or make some object of usefulness and beauty during one's leisure time is the desire of many homemakers. To do this out of materials that otherwise would not be used adds further enjoyment and satisfaction to the accomplishment. The aim of this circular is to give some suggestions and directions for making a few decorative objects from materials which either can be found in most homes or can be obtained easily.

Objects Made from Tin

There are a number of interesting things that can be made out of tin cans. A desk set including blotter corners, a letter holder, a pencil tray, and a pin or clip tray, several small trays suitable for cooky or candy dishes, and candle holders are only a few. Attractive fruit baskets and flower pots can be made by covering the cans with crepe paper or by weaving the paper between slits made in tin cans.

Tin cans of varying sizes are used. The No. 10 or near-gallon size is used for the fruit basket or the larger objects. The tin in the near-gallon cans seems to be heavier and more suited for the making of many of the articles than the smaller cans. However, many things can be made from the smaller cans. Different effects may be obtained by using cans with a lacquer lining.

General Procedure and Equipment Needed

Clean all tin cans and soak off the labels. With an automatic can opener that cuts a clean, smooth edge cut off the narrow seam which was left on the can when the top was removed. This is done by placing the can opener at right angles to the way it is ordinarily placed to the can. If the can is to be used to make a tray or other flat object, both ends will need to be removed.

Tin is poisonous if the flesh is cut or scratched, and since the edges are sharp it is necessary to wear gloves while working with it, especially during the cutting process. Sharp edges may be smoothed with a small file.

Materials Needed

Tin cans
One tube liquid solder
One-half pint clear shellac

Lacquer or enamel (optional)
Two or three sheets of carbon paper
Silver polish or fine scouring powder

Equipment Needed

One pair tin snips or kitchen scissors
One pair pointed pliers
One hammer
One dozen assorted nails
One can opener of a type that makes a smooth edge
One ruler
One file

One tape measure
One pair of old gloves
One block of soft wood about 9 x 12 in.
Other blocks of wood for moulding objects, sizes assorted, depending on the object being made. These should be of hard wood and edges true and square.

Directions for Making Special Articles

Trays.—Remove the top and bottom of the can, and cut it open along the soldered seam. Press the tin flat. Cut a rectangle the desired size, round off the corners, and file the edges.

If the surface is to be decorated, this is done before shaping the article. The pattern is applied in one of two ways. One method is to trace the design on the tin with carbon paper and a hard pencil, and then lift the pattern and retrace the design with a sharp nail. This will prevent the erasing of the pattern while one is working. The other method is to trace

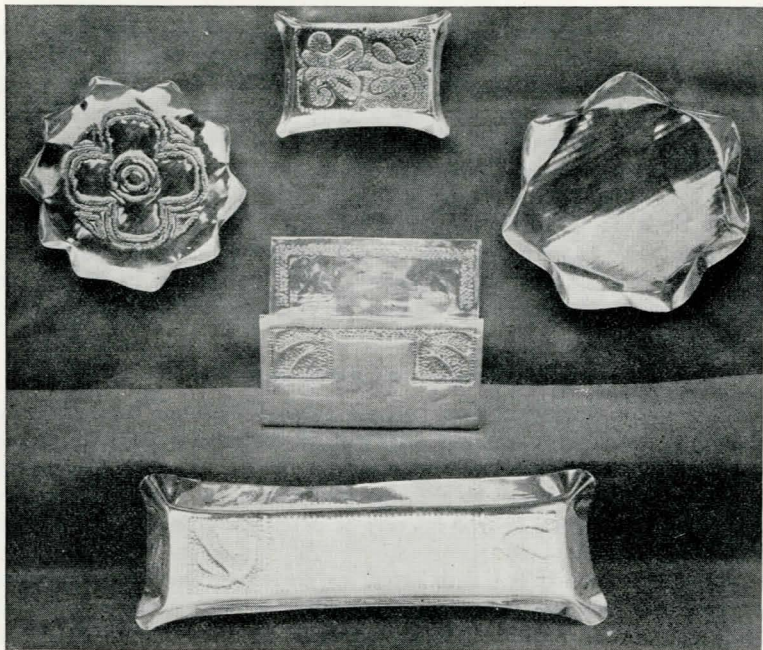


FIG. 1.—Articles made from tin cans.

the design on a paper the exact size and shape of the piece of tin being decorated, placing the design on the paper exactly as it is to appear on the finished article. Paste this paper pattern in position on the tin and work on top of the paper, which is removed when the design is completed.

The design is brought out by stamping the background, and this stamping gives the effect of embossing. See Figure 1. To do this, place the tin on a board of soft wood. Select or file a nail that will make a round dent in the tin. Hold it in a vertical position, and strike squarely with the hammer. Outline the entire design first, then fill in the background, and be careful that all the stamping is of even depth and does

not puncture the metal. A more pleasing effect is obtained when the dots are not too close to each other and are placed about the same distance apart throughout the design.

For shaping, select a block of wood of the same size as the bottom of the tray is to be. Mark on the bottom of the tray the depth of the sides which are to be turned. Now put the design side down over the block of wood. Bend down the sides carefully, beating them with a hammer from the center toward the corners. When all four sides are turned evenly, shape the corners. Work first on one side and then on the other so that corner space will close up evenly. See Figure 2.

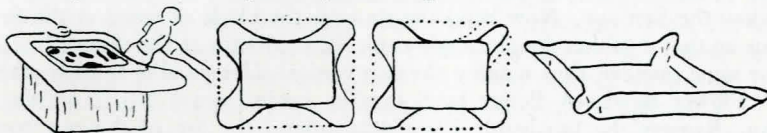


FIG. 2.—Steps in shaping a tin tray.

To make the tray more interesting in outline, hold it on its side against the block of wood and beat the sides out to form a slight flare. If the tray does not lie flat, place it upside down upon the block of wood and tap with a mallet or hammer on the stamped parts. This tapping will gradually level it out.

Variations of trays may be made in this same manner merely by changing the size of the piece of tin and the size of the moulding block. For a square tray cut a six-inch square of tin and mould it over a block of wood four and one-half inches square. The pin tray is made of a rectangular piece of tin cut three inches by four inches. It is moulded over a block of wood two inches by three inches. For the pencil tray cut a rectangle of tin three inches by nine inches and mould over a block of wood two inches by eight inches.

Round Trays.—Prepare the tin can as described for rectangular trays. Cut a circle six inches in diameter. File the edges. Trace the design and hammer in the background. Draw another circle one-half inch from the edge and mark off at regular intervals (one and one-half inches apart) around this line. The edge of the round tray is turned up with the pliers, placing the point of the pliers on the inner circle markings. Close the pliers and pull gently upward until the tin is at right angles to the bottom of the tray. Repeat until the full rim is formed. Attractive candy dishes may be made in this manner. (See Figure 1.)

Blotter Corners.—Cut a rectangle of tin two and three-fourths inches by five and one-half inches. Transfer the design and stamp in the pattern. To shape the corners, the tin is folded to make a triangular piece. Place pliers along the line of fold and turn carefully. Insert two thicknesses of blotter and complete the fold, hammering into place if necessary. Remove the blotter paper and the corners are ready for use on a desk blotter. (See cover page.)

Letter Holder.—Cut a rectangle of tin four and one-half inches by eight inches and file edges. Trace the front pattern on one side of the tin at one end and the back pattern on the other side of the tin at the other end. Stamp in pattern. Be sure to stamp on the correct side of the metal. Each end will be stamped on a different side so that when the holder is shaped the hammering on the ends will match.

A block of wood two inches by three and one-half inches by four and one-half inches will be helpful in bending the letter holder. Measure two and one-half inches down the front of the holder and draw a line across the width of the tin piece. Measure and draw another line two inches below the first one. Now bend the tin over the block of wood at the first line so that it makes a right angle turn. Bend the tin at the second line in the same manner, thus making the two vertical sides parallel to each other.

Flower Bowl.—A flower bowl may be made from a No. 2 or No. 5 can. Remove the top band. Place dots around the top of the can equidistantly, three-eighths inch to one-half inch apart, according to the size of the can. Beginning at the seam, cut parallel slashes down the sides of the can one-third or one-half way. After all strips are cut, grasp the end of each strip with the pliers and roll down to the end of the cut.

A variation may be obtained by cutting the front strips down farther than the back strips. See the flower bowl on the desk in the cover-page picture.

Candle Holder.—A jaunty little candle holder with a high back and a handle can be made from a tin can.

A paper pattern for a cutting guide should be made first. Use a width of paper the height of the holder at the back, and the length of the circumference of the can. Draw the shape of the opening on the paper, shaping the curves gracefully and in proportion to the size of the can being used. Trace the outline of the paper pattern on the can with the seam at the back or high side of the holder. Cut and file edges. A handle one-half inch to three-fourths inch wide is affixed at the bottom of the back with liquid solder. For the candle standard, cut a strip of tin about one and one-half inches wide, and long enough to make a cylinder in which the proper size candle will stand. Shape into a cylinder. Slash one edge in narrow strips about one-fourth inch to three-eighths inch deep and turn the strips toward the inside of cylinder. Solder in place in center of bottom of can. This makes a base for the candle. A can with a lacquered lining gives a pleasing contrast and the holder will need no additional decoration.

After the articles are completed, polish with silver polish and rub until they resemble pewter or silver. To prevent tarnish, cover with one coat of clear lacquer or white shellac.

Painted Decorations on Tin Articles

Paint or lacquer on tin articles makes an attractive variation. Follow the same directions for the making of the articles but omit the hammering

process. Use for a background a color that is grayed and will harmonize with the furnishings in the room. Yellows, yellow oranges, and oranges if dull enough as in grayish tan and taupes are useful background colors. Allow the paint to dry. Then trace the pattern that is to be painted. Designs that are decorative and have a lasting interest are simple in pattern and follow the structural lines of the object. A leaf or a flower may be used for the motif but it needs to be simplified and adapted to the object being decorated and to the material used, as well as to the process used in making the article. It is not important to be able to identify the original motif whether it be a flower, leaf, or bud, so long as the proportions and shapes are pleasing and the background shapes interesting. Place the designs around the edge of the object to form a border, at the corners, ends of the object, or on the bottom of the trays. Note that the designs on the articles shown in Figure 1 are adapted to the shapes of the objects.

It is important to choose harmonizing colors when painting these designs. Grayed colors are best for the larger areas and brighter colors for the small areas. Have some colors of a dark value and others of a lighter value. Keep a feeling of balance between the dark and light areas. A small amount of light color may balance a large amount of dark color or similarly a small amount of dark color may balance a large amount of light color. Study nature and see how the amounts of dark and light colors are arranged.

Guides for Combining Colors

A study of the color harmonies will be helpful in obtaining pleasing color combinations.

One-hue harmonies are those using one color in different values and intensities. An example of this harmony is dark dull blue-green, a light blue-green, and a bright blue-green. This is an easy harmony to use, but special attention needs to be given to the matching of colors exactly.

Analogous harmonies are those which use the colors next to one another on the color chart and are related by some common element, as yellow is found in yellow-green and green. These colors are also used in different values and intensities. The harmony is more successful if the colors selected are confined to those between the primaries. For example, between the primaries yellow and blue the following combinations might be used: yellow, yellow-green, and green; or yellow, yellow-green, green, blue-green, and blue; or green and blue-green.

Complementary harmonies are those which use the colors opposite one another on the color chart. Considerable care needs to be exercised in using this harmony as these colors seem to intensify one another when used together. Therefore, they need to be used in different amounts and in different intensities. The one chosen for the large area should be neutralized to almost gray, while the complement may be brighter. A pure, intense color is seldom used in any combination.

Triad harmonies are those that use the colors on the color chart located at the points of an equilateral triangle. These are the richest of all color harmonies if they are well used and the ones that need the most care in their treatment. The color chosen to occupy the largest space is so low in intensity that it is almost gray; the next largest amount of color is at least half-neutralized; the third may be bright but used only in a small amount. For a successful triad, one may use yellow-orange for the background. This is so nearly grayed that it is called tan. For the larger part of the design dull yellow-orange and a dull blue-green are used when for the small part of the design a bright red-purple is used.

Another example of a triad color harmony is tan and old blue with accents of red.

Decorative Objects Made from Serpentine Paper

Attractive small- and medium-sized bowls and hot-dish pads may be made from serpentine paper. Serpentine is a narrow strip of paper loosely rolled and can be purchased in packages containing five rolls of assorted colors.

To make the bowls the paper is re-rolled closely, making a flat disk. It is well to choose one of the softer colors and to start by making a few narrow folds in the strip, and then rolling the paper around this center. This is pulled as tightly as possible without tearing the strip and the roll is kept flat. The paper is wound into a flat disk until it is about three inches in diameter, which is large enough to make a small pin tray or small bowl. A disk five inches in diameter will make the larger bowl shown in Figure 3. The bowl will be more interesting if the color is changed from time to time as the paper is wound. The widths of the colors may be varied, making some bands narrow and others wider. After the paper is wound, it is placed flat on a table and sandpapered lightly on both sides with a fine sandpaper to roughen the surface. The dish is shaped by placing the thumbs in the center of the top side of the disk and the fingers on the under side. The outer rim is pushed gently upward with the fingers until the paper is the form of a bowl, with the edges kept at the same height. When a satisfactory shape has been made, the dish is shellacked to make it hold its shape. One coat of orange shellac and two coats of clear shellac, or two coats of water-proof varnish will be sufficient. The varnish will make it impervious to water.

By leaving the rolled disk flat, a hot-dish mat may be made.

Articles Made from Twisted Crepe Paper

Decorative objects which have unusual texture and interesting color may be made from a novel use of twisted crepe paper. The flower pot, tin can, glass jar, and box shown in Figure 3 were decorated by this method.

To prepare the paper.—The paper is twisted by pulling it through a gadget called a paper twister. The twister is a small block of wood having

two cone-shaped holes bored through it. It may be purchased in stores where the crepe paper is sold. For the small articles a strip of paper is cut three-fourths inch wide across the end of a folded package of crepe paper. This strip is unfolded and stretched. The ends of the strip are tapered and twisted between the thumb and finger and then threaded through the larger hole in the twister. It is pulled through slowly. The strip is next pulled slowly through the smaller hole. A smooth, tight rope is obtained when it is pulled through both of the holes. The twisted rope is drawn through the holes slowly to avoid breakage.

Applying to a flat surface.—Beginning at the bottom of the can or glass jar the glue is spread thinly over a narrow width around the jar. The end of the rope is tapered and is glued flat to the surface. The rope is wound around the glued jar and pressed lightly.

The rope may be spliced by tapering one end, leaving it fully twisted and moistened slightly with glue. This end is inserted inside a second piece which has been spread open. The two ends are twisted lightly together to the size of the rest of the rope.

When the band of color is the desired width, the rope is ended. The end of the rope is tapered, flattened, and moistened with glue and carefully slipped under the preceding row of rope. Soft, neutral-colored paper, such as tan, brown, or dull green, may be selected for the larger portion of the covering with narrow bands of bright color used for trimming.

Another method of adding a border decoration is made by braiding several strands of different colors together. The braid is flattened and glued around the top and bottom of the article.

The two larger baskets shown in Figure 3 are made by weaving the paper rope between slits cut in the tin cans. An uneven number of strips is necessary for the regular checkerboard weave of "over one, under one." For variation the paper strand may be woven over two and under one. The top of the can is measured to determine the width of the strips. These are marked and cut all the way down the side of the can.

The general shaping of the tin basket should be done before the weaving is begun. The crepe paper is cut one and one-half inches wide and stretched and pulled twice through the larger hole of the paper twister. Starting at the bottom of the can, the paper is woven over and under the cut strips, with care to prevent its being pulled too tightly. After two or three rows are woven, the finished portion is shaped and the rows of paper are pushed together smoothly to make a compact surface over the tin.

When the paper is woven to within one-fourth inch of the top, the last row is fastened by bending one tin strip forward and the other backward and clamping them firmly with pincers. The top edge is finished with flat braids made of four or five strands of the narrow rope braided together. One braid is glued to the top side and one to the under side. A wider braid is glued around the bottom edge to cover the narrow rim of tin.

The inside center of some of the baskets will need to be covered. A mat may be crocheted of the finely twisted rope to fit the bottom and glued to the tin. Two or three coats of clear shellac will strengthen the paper and preserve the surface. A piece of felt may be cut the correct shape and glued to the bottom of the basket to give it a more finished appearance.

This circular describes only a few of the articles that can be made by these methods. It is fascinating to see how many useful articles can be made from materials that otherwise would be thrown away or from materials that are inexpensive.

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