

## Drink Can Craft

by [bauble](#) on March 29, 2010

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## Intro: Drink Can Craft

Make a dragonfly, butterfly, flower, festive decoration, plant marker or anything else flat out of drink cans. The cans are easy to cut with scissors.



## Step 1: Sample drink can craft

Here's a sample of what you can make using simple tools like scissors and a small blade screwdriver for adding texture.

Edit: In answer to a couple of questions the edges aren't sharp and don't need to be filed or sanded. But if you were making something with corners then that would be a little sharp. So just stick to curved things or cut just the slightest curve on any corners you do have.

Edit: The painted label can easily be removed with 320 grit sandpaper. I haven't tried any other grades.



## Step 2: Materials and tools

You'll need a drink can of course.

- Scissors
- Small blade screwdriver



### Step 3: Prepare

Cut the can open. First of all 'stab' the can with one point of the scissors. Use this hole to get a start cutting around the top of the can. Then cut down the can to the bottom. Then cut off the bottom.

Roll out until it sits flat.

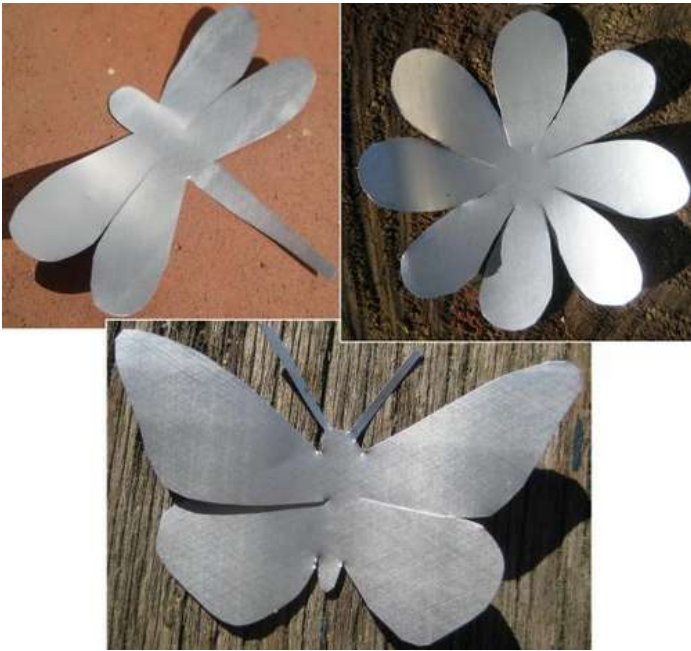
### Step 4: Draw your design

Use a non permanent felt tip marker or soft pencil to draw on your design.



### Step 5: Cut out the design

Cut around the outline of your design. You might be pleased with how it looks. Or if you want a more 3 dimensional textured look, go on to the next step.



### Step 6: Texture added

The designs come to life when a little bit of texture is added. This is easily done using a screwdriver.



### Step 7: How to add the texture

Adding texture with a blade screwdriver improves the look of your designs. Not only does the texture look good, but it creates a slight curl in the tin which leads the eye away from the raw edge. And it looks a little more 3 dimensional because of the curl.

Here's what do do. **TURN YOUR PIECE OVER SO THAT THE PLAIN SILVER SIDE IS DOWN. YOU NEED TO WORK ON THE LABEL SIDE.** My animation show me working on the plain side but that's so you can see it better.

You will be making dents in the can. So you'll need to work on something slightly soft like a newspaper.

Place the screwdriver near one edge of your design. Lean on it from one corner of the tip to the other tip in a rolling manner. Then move the screwdriver so that one corner of the tip sits in one of the little holes you just made. Repeat the rolling movement. Keep doing this until you've gone all the way around or whatever looks satisfactory to you.



### Step 8: How to display

You can just sit them in the garden or inside on a table, but why not make them extra special using Rimar2000's method of stiffening wire

The method involves putting one end of a length of thin wire in a drill, I used a cordless one, and wrapping the other end around something solid like a nail sticking out of a fence. Then turn the drill on. The wire will twist and stiffen becoming quite springy. It will then support the weight of these little drink can insects or flowers. They will sway around in the wind.

Edit: In answer to a question I attached the flower to the wire with Blu Tac. A more permanent solution would be hot glue. Maybe even chewing gum would set nice and hard to form a good bond.



### Step 9: Hearts

I've added these hearts in response to GodsLove's idea. The thin outline heart would be particularly nice as jewellery. Lightweight but easily bent out of shape.

The two bigger hearts are 4cm/1&1/2inches across.





### Step 10: Plant markers

Thanks to wocket's clever thinking I've now made some plant markers. The carrot sign was made using the screwdriver roll technique but with a smaller screwdriver. The radish sign was made using a pen. I just wrote on the back of the label and pressed quite hard. But remember you must write back to front. I used a pen that didn't work anymore.

I have now found that SteveGerber has already published How-to-make-durable-plant-markers/ His idea is for labelling buried bulbs. I'll be using my tags when I plant seeds in trays.



### Step 11: Badges/Labels

Here's some more ideas of what can be achieved by writing on the cans with a pen.



## Step 12: Festive decorations

Thanks to mooseinakilt for the great idea of making snowflakes.

You could also make stars, bells or christmas trees. Cookie cutter shapes could be a good inspiration.

The snowflake is a bit fiddly to cut. I cut six really fat 'fingers' and then cut little side bits out of them. I'd say that most people could do a better job than I've done as I've never drawn a snowflake before (snowflake making is not a tradition in my country - Christmas time is hot here).

For texture I drew around the edges with a non working pen on the back instead of making indentations with a screwdriver.

There will be lots of small offcuts, so be sure to collect them all for disposal. I've left the corners on my snowflakes. You can round them off if concerned about them.



### Related Instructables



**Drink Can Tinwork** by Mangetout



**Soda Can Flyer** by rogers236



**Drinking Glasses from Cans** by magiccowy



**Missile Technology on the Cheap.** by Kiteman



**No-Weld Versatile Decorative Flower Made from an Aluminum Can** by AngryRedhead



**Bookmarker: Blood Is Thicker Than Water** (Photos) by sparkleponytx

### Comments

40 comments [Add Comment](#)



**mooseinakilt** says:

Love it! I'm thinking I'll probably string a bunch of these together - maybe a snowflake design - and put them up as garland when we get a bit closer to the winter holidays.

Oct 23, 2010. 12:43 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Thanks for the great idea! I've added a snowflake and a star to step 12.

Oct 25, 2010. 12:39 AM [REPLY](#)



**mooseinakilt** says:

Aw, thanks - I really like the way yours turned out! I'll have to post up a picture for you in the comments when I get the garland done.

Oct 25, 2010. 10:01 AM [REPLY](#)



**Very Interesting** says:

Pretty!

May 23, 2010. 11:20 AM [REPLY](#)



**redlizard5** says:

how do you get it flat

May 7, 2010. 11:08 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

It will have a natural tendency to curl up with the painted side on the outside, so lay the painted side facing up and gently roll it the other way. When you let go it should lie reasonably flat. Or roll again if needs be.

May 8, 2010. 2:18 AM [REPLY](#)



**safya** says:

*very very nice thank you*

Apr 15, 2010. 9:28 AM [REPLY](#)



**EmKay73** says:

I wonder if you could emboss texture from other items... like making a pencil etching from an engraving. I think an embossing wand over an engraving would work nicely!

Apr 8, 2010. 8:40 AM [REPLY](#)

Could be a great idea for visitors at the Vietnam War Memorial instead of paper.



**bauble** says:

Hi, I've had to think about what you meant. I'm not really familiar with the etching/engraving example you gave. Do you mean pressing the can over something textured and then rubbing on it? I didn't think it would work, but I had a quick go rubbing the can over a metal grill pen holder. It worked reasonably well. I just can't find anything better than that right now to experiment with. I'd be interested if you have any ideas.

Apr 10, 2010. 5:10 AM [REPLY](#)



**mgroodt** says:

I think you will like this site - it's all about recycling cans. I have made the stars for Christmas.

Apr 9, 2010. 5:51 AM [REPLY](#)

[www.aluminouspublishing.com](http://www.aluminouspublishing.com)



**bauble** says:

Thanks for that link. There was some amazing stuff there. Just goes to show what a wonderfully versatile material these cans are.

Apr 10, 2010. 5:02 AM [REPLY](#)



**Avasar10000** says:

If you have a Harbor Freight in your area, you can purchase steel lettering punches in 1/4, 3/8, and 1/2 sizes. Generally they run extremely good pricing on these punches (3.99 to 8.99) for a full alphabet and numbers 0-8 with the 6 and 9 being reversible. You could even buy an extra set to make your own punch designs through annealing the metal, creating your design, and re-hardening the punch.

Apr 8, 2010. 8:32 AM [REPLY](#)



**firefighter1333** says:

ooh, i could use these for homemade arrow tips! yay thx

Apr 8, 2010. 8:28 AM [REPLY](#)



**tbeatty** says:

Very creative. We drink alot of soda, and this gives us a way to recycle them into something functional. I'm picturing decorative light switch covers, some fish for the bathroom wall... Thanks for the inspiration. =)

Apr 5, 2010. 9:19 AM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Glad to be of help. If you do make the light switch covers it would be a good subject for an instructable for you to make.

Apr 6, 2010. 1:54 AM [REPLY](#)

I like your fish idea. Funny I didn't think of it considering my avatar is a fish. There's lots of scope for fine detail in the fins and scales. I think I'll make one. Thanks for the idea.



**GodIsLove** says:

Sorry I didn't read it yet I'm a bit busy right now. But from what it looks like I would love to make a heart.

Mar 30, 2010. 1:39 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

That's a very good idea. I'll make one tomorrow and post a photo.

Mar 31, 2010. 2:01 AM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Have added three hearts. Thanks for the idea. That cross in you avatar would work well too.

Mar 31, 2010. 6:47 PM [REPLY](#)



**GodIsLove** says:

Thank you for trying out my idea. Those look great, now I will just have to get a can and make some. I bet some of my friends at church would love them. Also I just got the idea of trying to engrave words into one. I might try that if I get around to making one of these. Thanks again.

Apr 1, 2010. 2:07 AM [REPLY](#)





**bauble** says:

Yes, after you suggested the heart idea I thought of writing on them too. But I didn't do a very good job and forgot to write back to front on some of the letters. So I put it aside. After reading your comment I gave it another go and have included it in the steps.

Apr 2, 2010. 6:01 PM [REPLY](#)



**GodsLove** says:

Wow those look really nice, I was thinking I could write a verse on one thanks so much.

Apr 2, 2010. 6:34 PM [REPLY](#)



**GodsLove** says:

Awesome thank you I will check it out. This is awesome.

Apr 2, 2010. 6:32 PM [REPLY](#)



**suezq** says:

Very nice 'ible and one that i'll have fun with! They could be spray painted on the label side to hide the labels if one didn't want then to show. I might try painting the silver side with some butterfly colors etc. A grouping of all aluminum ones in a garden, swaying in the breeze would be awesome too! Thanks for the ideas.

Mar 31, 2010. 9:59 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Yes, painting over the label would make them nicer. I've just had a go at using 320 grit sand paper to remove the paint and it did it EASILY and QUICKLY. I was surprised.

Apr 2, 2010. 3:21 AM [REPLY](#)



**domestic\_engineer** says:

Those are really cute.

I'm looking to make plant markers for my garden. I bet these would be great. I wonder if you wrote on them with sharpie or pencil, if the writing would last. Really cute!

Mar 30, 2010. 7:38 AM [REPLY](#)



**wocket** says:

I've done this, you can indent the name of the plant in the metal so you don't have to worry about the ink coming off.

Apr 1, 2010. 4:13 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

That's a great idea. I've already indented some writing but will wait for daylight to take a photo. But I didn't make the connection of using it for plant tags. Wonderful.

Apr 2, 2010. 3:02 AM [REPLY](#)



**LadyInRedwoods** says:

A china marker/grease pencil will work best. You can find them at any office supply store and perhaps craft stores. They are inexpensive, the markings can be removed at the end of the season, and your plant markers can be used again next season!

Mar 30, 2010. 10:50 AM [REPLY](#)

Happy Planting!



**bauble** says:

That china pencil sounds like it's suitable. Sharpies aren't. I've decorated plastic bottle whirligigs with them and they fade after a few weeks.

Mar 31, 2010. 1:54 AM [REPLY](#)



**BeDub** says:

Very cool! Are the edges sharp enough to cut fingers?

Mar 30, 2010. 10:02 AM [REPLY](#)



**wocket** says:

they can and do cut if you hold them at the wrong angle.

Apr 1, 2010. 4:14 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

That's a good question. No the edges aren't sharp at all even before they are textured. I just rubbed the edge from a piece of scrap on my thumb and it didn't cut or hurt. But as [BadVanGoh](#) points out the corners are sharp. But your finished piece probably won't have any corners.

Mar 31, 2010. 1:38 AM [REPLY](#)



**emjayg** says:

Mar 31, 2010. 2:28 AM [REPLY](#)



**emjayg** says:

I will have to start drinking soft drink in tins, or maybe beer, so I can have a go at making a flower. The instructions are well written, very easy to understand.

Mar 31, 2010. 2:22 AM [REPLY](#)



**graynation** says:

So cute but I have the same question as BeDub. Are the edges sharp? Do you need to file them?

Mar 30, 2010. 5:36 PM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Copy of my answer to original BeDub question:

That's a good question. No the edges aren't sharp at all even before they are textured. I just rubbed the edge from a piece of scrap on my thumb and it didn't cut or hurt. But as [BadVanGoh](#) points out the corners are sharp. But your finished piece probably won't have any corners.

Mar 31, 2010. 2:02 AM [REPLY](#)



**BadVanGoh** says:

usually with the metal from cans, its only sharp if its a corner, or if you deliberately try to cut things

Mar 30, 2010. 9:10 PM [REPLY](#)



**Sandtress** says:

How did you attach the wire to the back of the flower? Thanks!

Mar 30, 2010. 10:58 AM [REPLY](#)



**bauble** says:

Good question. I only used Blu Tac. But when I make a few more I was thinking of using a hot glue gun. Another way of making springy stems is to cut 6mm/1/4inch wide strips out of fizzy drink bottles. Bend them about 6mm/1/4inch from one end and glue that tab onto the item. Or if you can make a slit in the item, poke the bent end of the strip through. If it doesn't spoil the appearance of course.

Mar 31, 2010. 2:00 AM [REPLY](#)



**ChrysN** says:

Pretty, adding texture does make it extra nice!

Mar 30, 2010. 4:00 PM [REPLY](#)