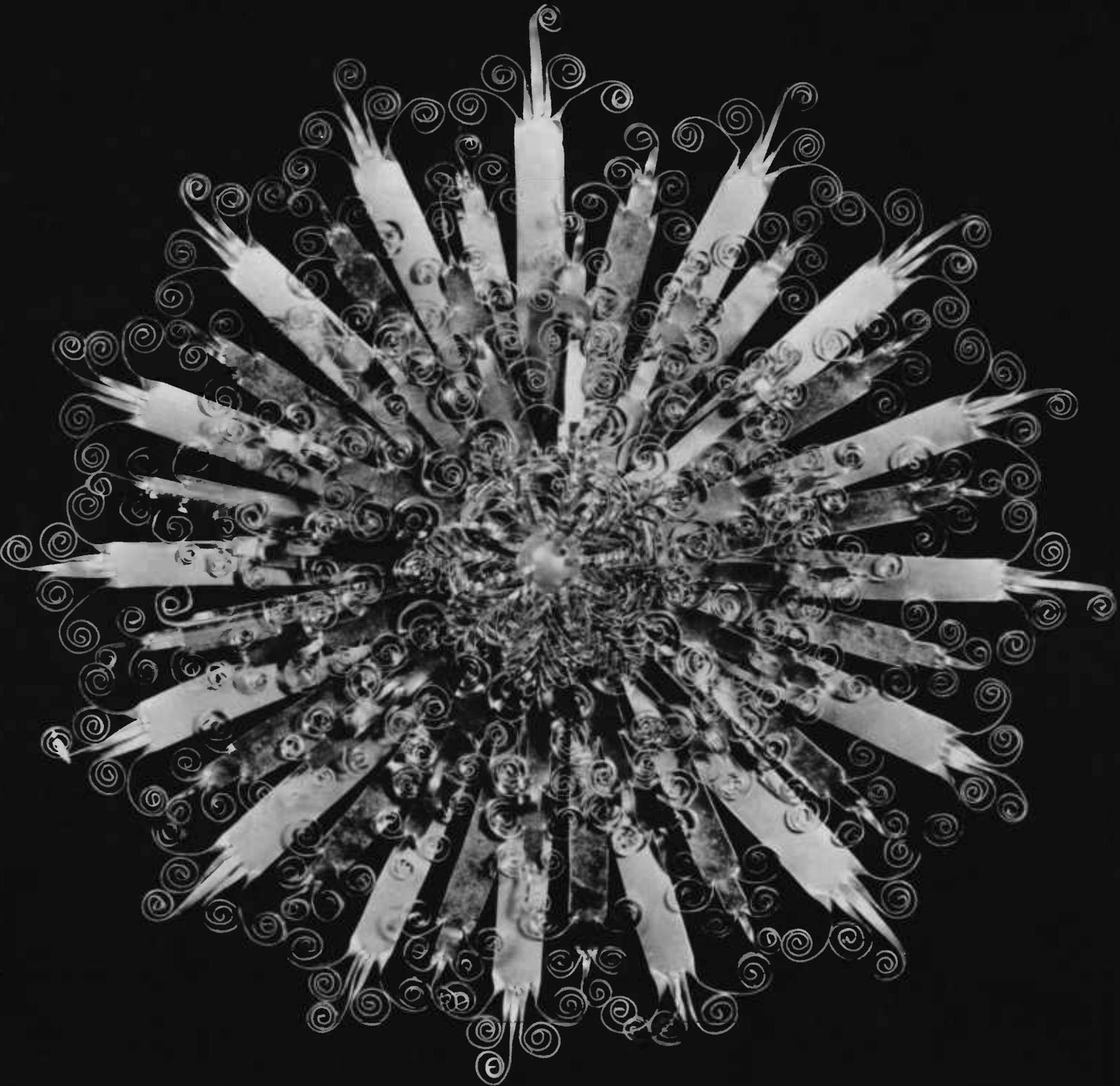


# *Decorative Tin-Can Craft*



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# *Decorative Tin-Can Craft*

The value of tin as a medium for artistic and creative expression too often has been overlooked. Yet, it is a material with unique possibilities. It is light in weight, easily bent, coiled or curled, easy to cut, is smooth, thin, shiny, and lasting if its surface is protected from rust--and free for the saving!

The fact that tin is free for the salvaging, however, should not be the only factor in choosing it as a craft medium. Rather, consider it as a material which presents a vast field for creative imagination and exploration. The cost of many other craft materials makes extensive exploration prohibitive; but in using tin cans, one may experiment indefinitely in converting this waste product into sparkling ornaments of surprising beauty or into useful items which also are decorative--all without fear of straining the budget.

There is a need in every program for art-craft ideas which may be carried on creatively with a minimum of materials, tools, and equipment. Tin-can craft is the answer to that need since there is a great supply of tin discarded daily in every community. It is the goal of this bulletin to awaken its readers to ways in which this waste material may be utilized. With a bit of creative thinking, tin-can craft may bring a sparkling beauty and a real learning experience into the lives of all who try it.

New ideas are born only as one works in a medium, be it in sewing, in cooking, or in crafts. Therefore, the ideas presented in this bulletin are meant only as an exploratory start into the exciting realm of creative tin-can craft.

A minimum of tools and materials is needed:

## I. Tools

- A. A quality pair of small size tin snips with either straight cutting blades or blades that have a serrated edge and leave a serrated cut.
- B. A quality pair of needle-nose pliers, tapering to a fine point, with which to curl narrowly cut tin strips.
- C. A sharp ice pick or awl with which to pierce tin when holes are needed.
- D. A waste piece of soft board, such as the end of a fruit crate, on which to lay tin for piercing holes.

## II. Materials

- A. Tin cans of various sizes and tin lids of all sizes.
- B. Odds and ends of beads, buttons, costume jewelry, sequins, rhinestones, tiny Christmas balls, etc.
- C. Fine wire.
- D. Clear jeweler's cement.
- E. Heavy cotton or woolen rug yarn, discarded jewelry chains or ball chains on which to hang bells.
- F. Gloves, if hands are sensitive.

## Star Medallion

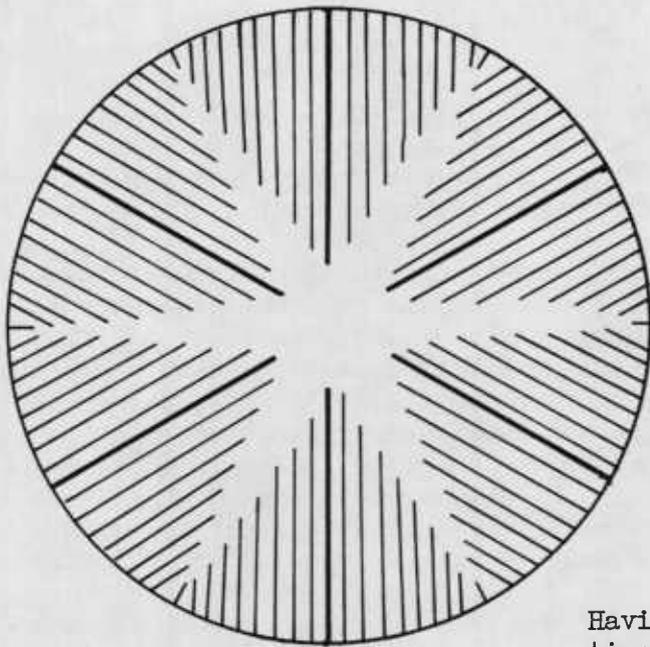


Diagram 1

The star medallion is basic. Learn to cut this accurately and many variations follow easily. Any size tin lid may be used for this medallion; however, if very large can lids are used, the number of divisions should be increased.

With tin snips, cut a tin-can lid into six equal divisions, leaving an uncut area in the center equal to the size of a dime. See diagram 1. All the medallions used on the Christmas tree shown in Illustration 1, were cut from dog-food can lids which usually are lacquered in gold on the inside. Six cuts in this size lid are sufficient.

Having divided the lid into sixths, begin cutting each section into thin strips, first cutting one strip from the right, and next cutting a strip from the left. Every cut must

be alternated from right to left. Always cut from the outside edge of the lid toward the center of each section and always cut one strip from the right, the next strip from the left, next strip from the right, next strip from the left, etc., leaving a narrow uncut strip down the center of each section.

The tin snips will cause the thin strips at the left side to curl up automatically and the strips cut at the right side to curl down automatically. Arrange the cut strips of each section symmetrically before proceeding to cut another section; otherwise, they will become tangled and misshapen. When all the thin strips have been cut and pulled into place, you have a three-dimensional ornament which is pretty as is, to hang upon a Christmas tree. However, in order to flatten it on one side so that it may be attached to a chicken wire cone, press all the strips that face one side of the lid flat against the other strips. Pull out 5 or 6 long pieces and bend them over the chicken wire.

Any desired size of chicken wire cone may be covered thus with medallions. The tree shown in Illustration 1 is formed of 18-inch chicken wire. To cut a newspaper tree-cone pattern, describe one-fourth of an 18-inch radius circle on a newspaper. This may be accomplished easily by tying a string to the



Illustration 1



Illustration 2

end of a lead pencil and holding the string with 1 finger 18 inches from the pencil point at a corner of the newspaper; then swing the pencil in an arc. Cut out the newspaper pattern; lay it on the chicken wire, and cut the wire with tin snips. Do not form the cone until all the medallions have been attached by their own prongs to the wire. Sixty-five dog-food can lids were required to make the Christmas tree shown in Illustration 1. When the wire cone is covered with medallions, fasten its sides together with fine wire and add enough medallions to cover the seam. A cardboard cone covered with gold or silver paper placed inside the wire cone will add beauty to this tree.

Small Christmas Tree

The tree shown in Illustration 2 requires from 5 to 9 lids in diminishing sizes. Pierce a hole in the center of each lid and make all cuts as just described above to form a medallion of each lid. Flatten on one side as above. Secure a sturdy wire upright in a small block of plastic foam or in plaster of paris in a small, shallow tin (a baby-

food can cut down). Thread the lids down over the upright wire to form a small tree.

Variation 1

A Number 10 can lid was used for the medallion shown in Illustration 3. The procedure for cutting it is exactly the same as described above except that it was cut into eighths instead of sixths, and after all cuts had been completed the tip end of each strip was given one curl with a pair of needle-nose pliers. The center strips, however, were curled up a number of times to fill in the center area.

Variation 2

Christmas Ornament--Illustration 4. This variation is made more colorful by the addition of small Christmas tree balls in the center. The first six strips from the center of the medallion are shaped around a brightly colored ball. With a pair of needle-nose pliers make a tight



Illustration 3



Illustration 4

etc., so there will be sufficient space to separate them. Careful examination of the illustration will show where the curled strips have been pulled, some up, some down, until the whole ornament is rounded out and 3-dimensional in effect. The center curls are brought over the center of the ornament and no added ball is necessary.

#### Variation 4

Illustration 6. The only difference between Variation 3 and 4, is that Variation 4 is cut from a 25-pound lard-can lid and into 8 instead of 6 sections. The strips on each division have been laid out flat after being curled, one close to the center vein, the next one out, and so on up, as clearly shown in Illustration 6. The lower curls toward the center have been pulled up on both sides to form a ball-like center.

#### Variation 5

The center medallion, shown in Illustration 7, is made with the same technique described in Variation 4. As the strips of each section are curled in toward the center strip, they are bent out at the sides to form a flat filigree rather than a rounded star shape. Some of the strips may be pulled out and overlapped with strips from the next section for a more interesting filigree effect and the center section may be curled down tightly toward the center to fill in the area. Again no ball is needed.

backward curl at the end of each of these six center strips. Hold the strips together with a piece of fine wire slipped under the curls and twisted snugly. This will keep the ball from falling out. A ball may be added on each side if these ornaments are hung by nylon thread in a window or archway. They will twist and turn with the currents of air in a continuous pattern of sparkling beauty.

#### Variation 3

Illustration 5. Again use the cutting technique described. A Number 10 lid was cut into sixths, then cut into strips as described for the star medallion. Diagram 1. With a pair of needle-nose pliers, curl the end of each strip tightly as in the medallion shown in Illustration 3. Then with the fingers protected with an old pair of leather gloves, curl each strip down in a coil as shown. As you work, alternate the curls, one up and one down, the next one up, the next one down,



Illustration 5



Illustration 6

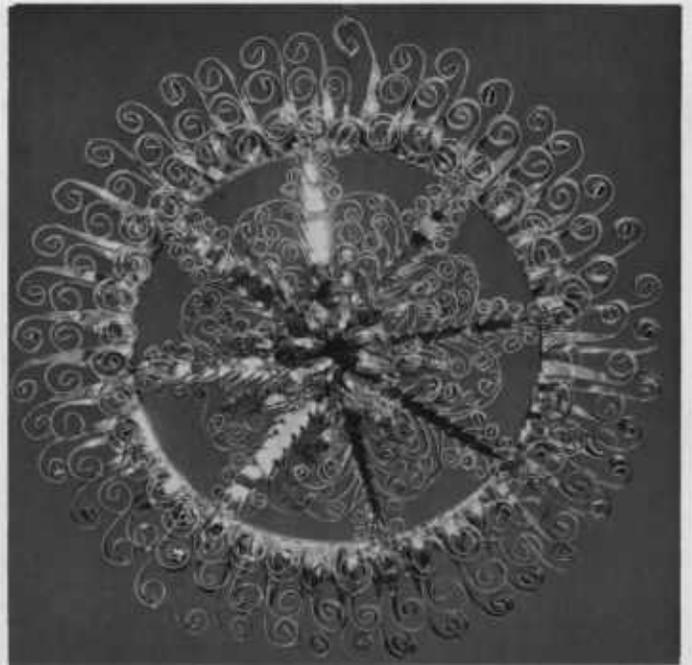


Illustration 7

The circle framework for the medallion shown in Illustration 7 is made from a 1-pound coffee can. First cut out the bottom of the coffee can and spray or paint the outside of the can with the color desired--red, gold, silver, or copper--then cut the entire can down to the rim in very narrow strips as shown. Starting with a pair of needle-nose pliers as described before, make a tight curl in the end of every third strip. Then with the fingers protected with adhesive tape or gloves, curl each third strip down to the rim until a complete circle is made. The second strip in each group is then curled just above the first as shown, and the third strip is curled just above the second until a complete circle of filigree curls is completed. This makes a beautiful ornament to hang on the door, over the mantel, or on the wall at any time of the year--but particularly during the Christmas season.

#### Large Medallion

This medallion is shown on the cover and requires one Number 2 1/2 can lid and 4 tall, slender tin cans in graduated sizes, preferably with gold-lacquered linings. However, if the desired sizes are obtained, and the linings are not gold, they may be sprayed with gold paint. The outsides of the cans also should be sprayed before any cutting is done; otherwise the coloring and lettering on the outside of the can will show in the "curls." Most suitable for making this medallion are liquid-detergent cans, which come in a variety of sizes; large-size, concentrated-frozen-juice cans; popcorn cans, etc. The largest can used in the medallion illustrated here is a quart-size, liquid-detergent can with a 3 3/8-inch diameter. The next 3 cans are smaller but all have the same 2 1/2-inch diameter. The second can is 2 1/2 inches shorter than the first can. The third can is 1 1/2 inches shorter than the second can, and the fourth can is exactly the same height as the third can.

After the tops have been removed (the bottoms remain in for this ornament), the heavy top rims are cut off and each can is cut down to the bottom on both sides of the seam. If this seam is bent back and forth several times, it will break off easily.

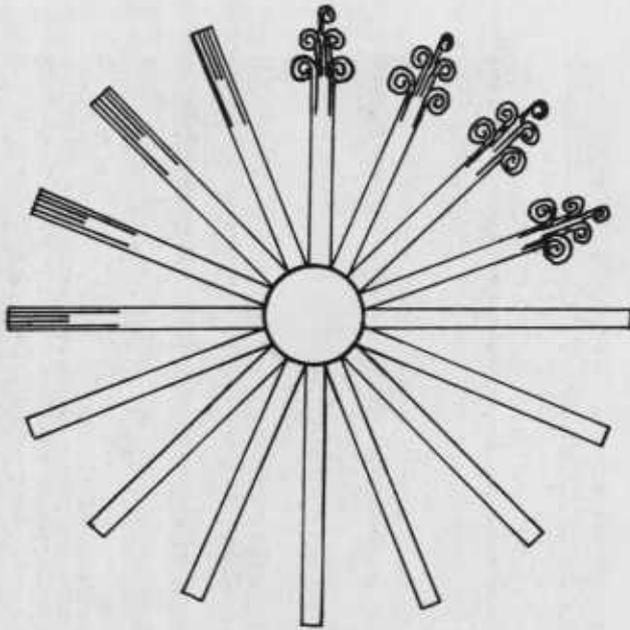


Diagram 2

Divide each can into 16 equal sections. This may be accomplished easily by wrapping a strip of paper around the can to get the exact circumference of it. Remove the strip and fold it in half, and then in fourths, eighths, and sixteenths. Tape this strip about 2 inches from the can top and make all cuts down to meet the 16 divisions on the paper strip. Then lower the guide strip another 2 inches and cut again. This is much easier than trying to make each cut clear to the bottom at one try. This is one time gloves are helpful because the edges of the 16 strips tend to cut across the thumb and knuckles. As soon as all 16 sections of each can's sides have been cut, bend them down flat with the can bottom so they form a flat sunburst as shown in Diagram 2. Make slits 3 1/2 inches long in the end of each section of the tallest can, dividing it into 5 equal strips. With a pair of needle-nose pliers make a complete forward curl in the end of each

of the 5 narrow strips. Either wear an old pair of kid gloves, or protect the thumb and index finger with adhesive tape bandages. Grasp the curled end of each strip between the thumb and index finger and curl all the way down to the end of the cut with the fingers. Then turn and flatten the curl out to the side as shown in Diagram 2 and the illustration on cover. All the center curls are turned in the same direction.

The slits in the end of each section on the second can should be cut only about 2 1/2 inches deep. Proceed to curl and bend into place all the strips on the 16 sections of the second can. The end of each of the 16 sections of the third can also are cut 2 1/2 inches long and curled and bent into place.

Although the fourth can is the same height as the third can, the slits in the end of every other section are cut to within one-half inch of the bottom of the can. The alternating sections are slit to within 1 1/4 inches of the bottom of the can. As the slits are then curled down, arrange them to fill in to best advantage the blank area around the bottom of the can. The center curl in each section of this fourth can is not turned to the side but curled straight forward and allowed to remain there.

For the center make a Star Medallion--Variation 1, shown in Illustration 3, page 5. Flatten one side of the medallion down completely.

Punch 2 holes in the center of each can bottom with a sharp ice pick. Fasten all 4 cans together by running a piece of wire up through the 2 holes in each. Twist the ends of the wire together to hold the 4 medallion pieces tightly together; then run the ends of the wire up on either side of the center of the medallion lid which has been cut, curled, and flattened on the back. Again twist the wire ends together securely and cut off the excess. A small Christmas tree ball may be added to the center as the finishing touch.

## Large Angel

The lid or bottom from a Number 10 can, which may be obtained without any cost from a bakery or restaurant, may be used for making the large angel shown in Illustration 8. Trace the pattern in Diagram 3, page 10, onto tracing paper, indicating the arm cuts and the head cuts only. Cut the pattern out and attach to can lid with paper clips. With tin snips, cut down close to the center on both sides of each arm strip and on both sides of the head strip. Remove the pattern.

Starting at the center front of the skirt, make a barely perceptible upward bend or crease in the tin with the needle-nose pliers. Slip the pliers over about 1 1/4 inches and make the next upward bend, also very lightly. Be sure the nose of the pliers always points to the exact center of the lid. Complete all the upward bends. After all creases have been put in lightly, go back over them and crease them deeply. Bend the skirt edges around to form a cone. Bring the arms forward and bend into a position of prayer.



Illustration 8

Now, slash the wing sections exactly as described at the beginning of this bulletin in the directions for making the basic star medallion. Use your own creative imagination to curl the wing strips in any way pleasing to you.

The head may be merely suggested by looping the head strip down in an oval over the arm strips already bent to resemble hands folded in prayer. See Illustration 8. If a more conventional head is desired, slip a wooden bead of appropriate size, or a small rubber ball over the head strip. Cut hair according to Diagram 4, piercing a hole in the center and slipping it over the head strip. Shape the hair around the head, curling a few strips tightly around the face. Features may be added of gummed signal dots or cut out of "passe partout."

The halo is made of a juice-can lid finely fringed around the edge with each strip twisted twice. To attach pierce a slit in its lower edge. Through this run a thin strip of tin long enough to encircle the angel's neck. It may be held in place by forcing two prongs of the wings up through the halo fringe.

For a truly handsome Christmas decoration for a mantel, make three of these angels in varying sizes. Restaurants and bakeries have cans with lids up to 12 inches in diameter.

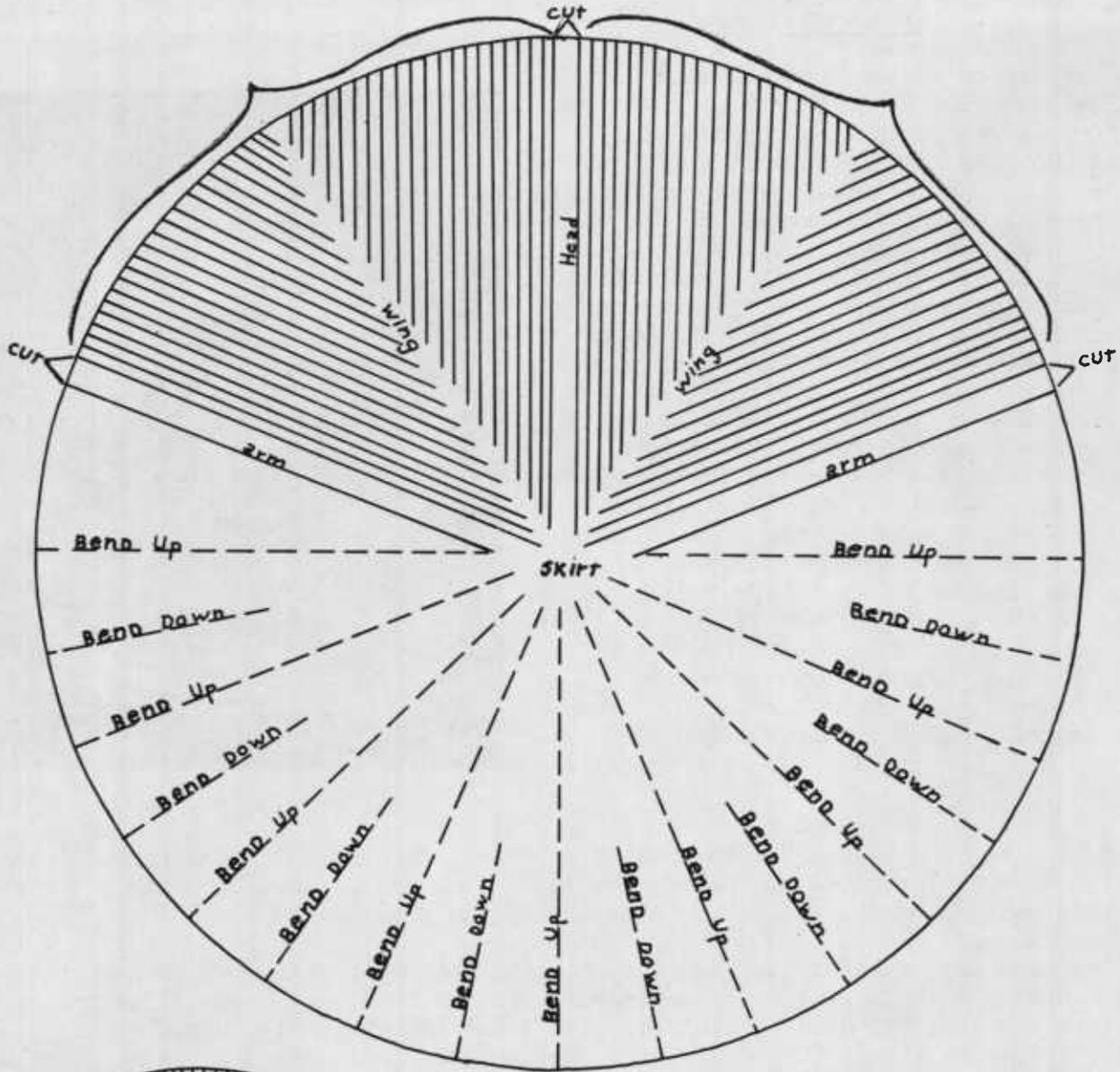


Diagram 3  
Actual Size Pattern

Additional inward creases (bend down) also are shown on the above diagram in case an accordion pleated skirt effect is desired.

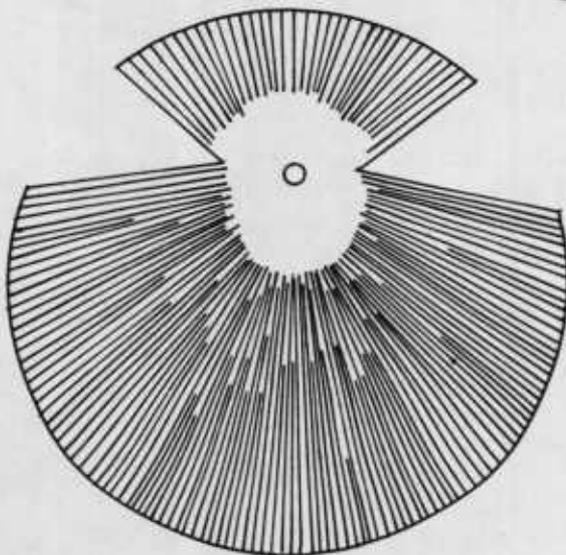
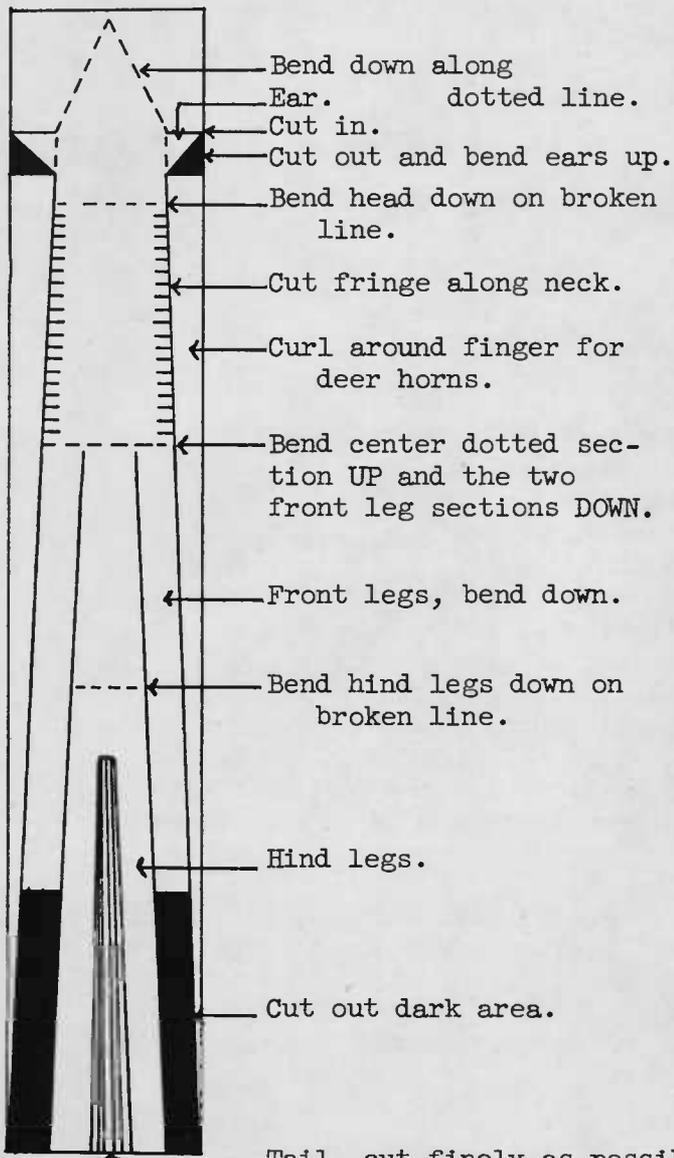


Diagram 4  
Actual Size Pattern



Illustration 9

Tin-Can Deer



Bend down along  
 Ear. dotted line.  
 Cut in.  
 Cut out and bend ears up.  
 Bend head down on broken  
 line.  
 Cut fringe along neck.  
 Curl around finger for  
 deer horns.  
 Bend center dotted sec-  
 tion UP and the two  
 front leg sections DOWN.  
 Front legs, bend down.  
 Bend hind legs down on  
 broken line.  
 Hind legs.  
 Cut out dark area.

Figure A, Illustration 9.

Completely open up a tin can, cutting off lids, rims, and the seam. Trace the accompanying diagram onto tracing paper and then transfer it onto a straight, smooth piece of the tin with graphite carbon paper.

1. Cut V's behind ears. Make ear cut as shown and bend up ears.
2. Make diagonal bends at head to shape head and nose.
3. Cut the long, thin horn strips and curl them up over the finger.
4. Fringe the neck as shown on the pattern.
5. Bend head down and bend the neck up.
6. Cut the remainder of pattern as shown, cutting off the forelegs where indicated.
7. Bend legs into position, turning under about 1/2 inch for feet.
8. Fringe tail section as finely as possible.

Diagram 5

Tail, cut finely as possible.

## Leaf Place-Favor Candleholder

Figure B, Illustration 9. Completely open up a gold-lacquer-lined can (a dog-food can is the right size). Trace the accompanying leaf pattern, Diagram 6, on the flattened can and cut it out. Inscribe the veins with a sharp tool such as an ice pick, nail, or awl. Curl the long strip around a pencil or dowel of the same size as the birthday candle to be used. (This candleholder requires a 3-inch x 5/16-inch birthday taper.)

A name may be scratched or painted on the stem section if desired.

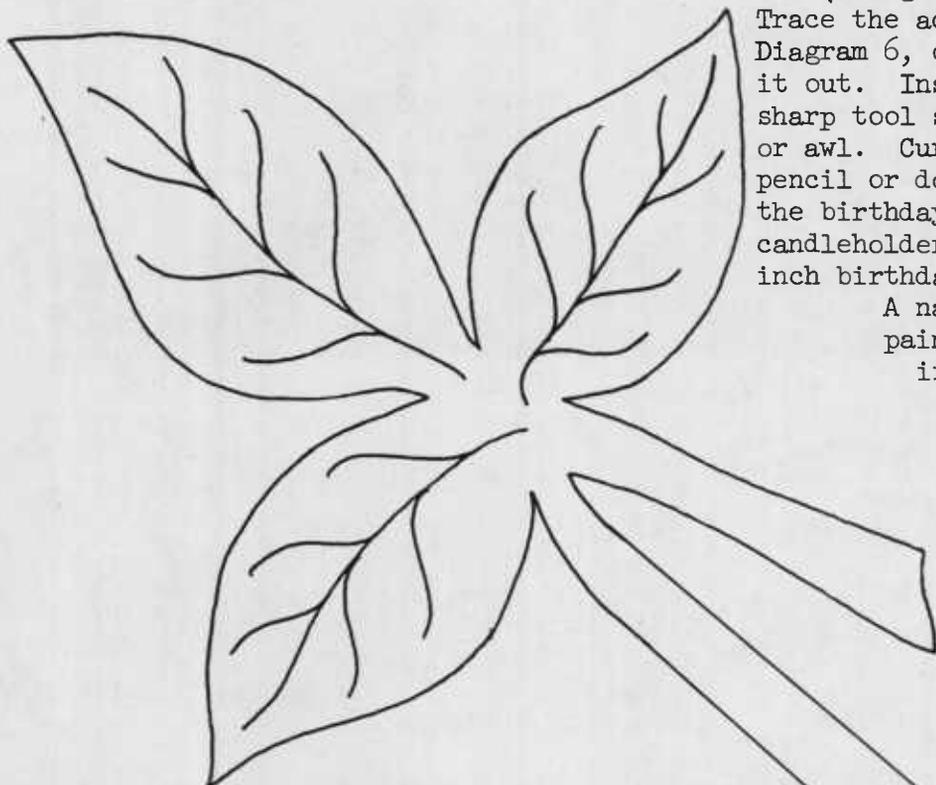


Diagram 6

### The Birdhouse Ornament

Figure C, Illustration 9. This decoration may be hung on the Christmas tree or used as a place favor. It is made from two medium-sized tin-can lids and a large, empty spool. Form the base by first punching a hole in the center of one lid. Then divide the edge into 16 equal segments and cut toward the center on each division for one-half inch. Scallop these edges by starting at the center of each division and rounding off the sharp corner of each section down to the end of the 1/2-inch cut. Do this all the way around the lid. Turn the lid over and round off the opposite sharp corner of each section. This will give you scalloped edges. Turn one scallop up and one scallop down all the way around. Repeat this entire procedure for the roof, but do not bend the scallops; instead, cut between two scallops to the center of the circle and overlap to form a cone-shaped roof.

Paint the spool and decorate with bits of sequins, rhinestones, rick-rack, etc. A band of sequins also may be added to the roof. Avoid overdecorating this small ornament. To make a hanger, use an 8-inch length of sturdy wire, bend in the middle and pass the two ends through the hole in the roof, down through the spool, and through the bottom for one-half inch, and open up the wire ends.

## Small Angel

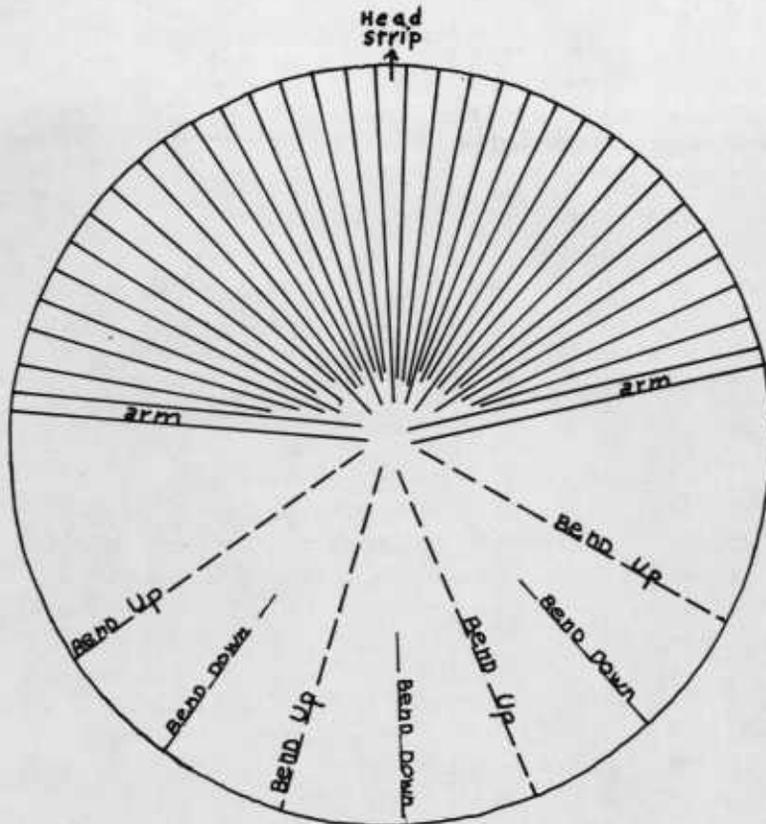


Diagram 7  
Actual Size Pattern

Figure D, Illustration 9. The small angel shown in Illustration 9 is especially suitable for a table favor. One lid from a Number 2 1/2 can is required. Cut the lid in toward the center from both sides according to Diagram 7, which is an actual size pattern. Cut the smaller half in radiating strips. These will suggest wings as they spread out behind the angel head. Bend the two strips closest to the skirt forward to form arms. The ends of these two strips also may be bent to form hands which can hold a small rectangle of tin, creased in the middle to represent a song book. Slip a 3/4-inch bead over the head strip and tie a bit of ribbozene at the neck. Add bits of curly pot-cleaner for hair, and paste or paint on features. Instead of a bead, the head might be cut from a Christmas card or gift wrapping paper and pasted in place. This angel's skirt was accordion pleated.

## Star Decoration

Figure E, Illustration 9. Trace only the star from Diagram 8 on tracing paper. Cut out and attach to a Number 2 1/2 can lid. Carefully cut along the star point edges as shown in Diagram 8 in the same manner in which the basic medallions are cut, being extremely careful not to sever the center vein. When all cuts have been made, flatten out the fine strips and with a pair of needle-nose pliers bring two of the longest strips from each side of each section over the top of the star and curl the end as shown. Do this on both sides.

This makes a beautiful, light-weight tree ornament or an attractive decoration for a package. When a number of stars in varying sizes are scattered over a deep-toned tablecloth they usually cause many comments.

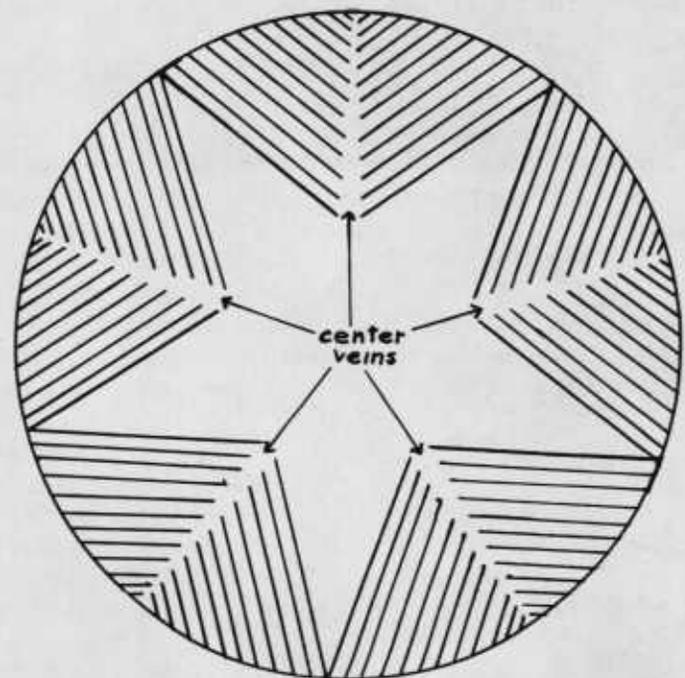


Diagram 8

## "Bells of Sarna" (Tin Version)



Illustration 10

Figure A, Illustration 10.

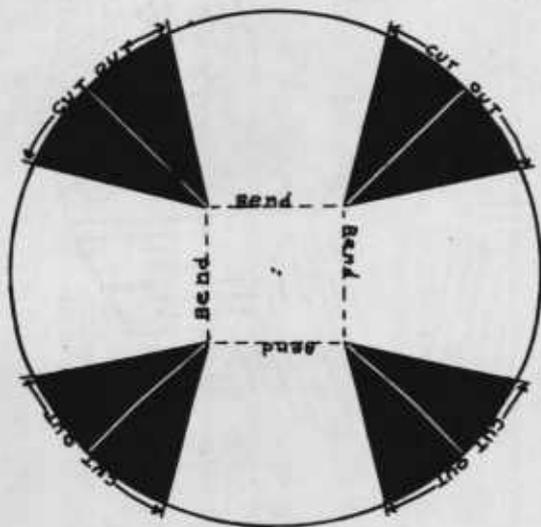
1. Use five or more tin-can lids of graduated sizes for each string of bells--small, frozen-juice cans, baby-food cans, etc., up to the coffee-can size.
2. Punch a hole in the center of each lid.
3. Divide each lid into fourths by cutting in from the outer edge to within one-half inch of the center. Then cut away a pie-shaped wedge from either side of each divisional cut. See Diagram 9.
4. Bend the tabs on the dotted lines indicated on the diagram. You now have a bell shape with a square center.
5. Use varying lengths of rug yarn according to your taste. Tie a double knot in the end of the yarn and bring it up through the smallest bell. Allowing a 4- to 6-inch space, tie another double knot, and bring the yarn up through the next smallest bell, etc., until 5 or so bells of increasing size have been strung on a length of yarn. Pierce 5 holes in a cottage cheese lid-- 1 in the center and 4 at equidistant points around the rim; bring the 4 shorter strings of bells, made as just described, up through the 4 outside holes finishing the end of each string with a double knot to keep it from pulling through the lid. Hang the longest string in the center. Top the entire decoration with a full, pom-pom ribbon bow to hide all the knots in the strings.

Figure B, Illustration 10. This

string of bells was made of 39 can lids of varying sizes, each crimped as described on page 15, and equipped with bead clappers.

Each bell is attached individually to a length of rug yarn, the other end of which is brought up through a punched hole in a small tin can lid and knotted. Thirty-nine holes were punched in the tin lid, distributed as evenly as possible. After all strings were added, two 10-inch wires were doubled at their centers, and the ends were run up through the lid at four equidistant points from the outer rim and then twisted together to balance the bells. The upper part of the wires may be twisted together to form a hanger. The final decorative touch is the addition of a pom-pom bow to hide the 39 knots on top of the lid.

Diagram 9 The wire hanger may come up through the ribbon loops.



To make the bells:

Pierce two small holes close together at the center of each lid. Place the needle-nose pliers so their ends touch the center of the lid. Make a barely perceptible bend of the lid against the edge of the pliers. Repeat this gentle crimping at eight equal intervals around the lid. It is easier to crimp first in half, then in fourths, and then in eighths. Now turn the lid over and make an additional crimp in reverse direction in the middle of each eighth. This will produce an accordion pleated effect--all still barely perceptible. Now repeat the entire process going over each bend and strengthening it and gradually working it into bell shape. A glove on the left hand is necessary for this manipulation as you force the tin pleats inward to form a bell cone.

For each bell use a piece of fine wire from 6 to 10 inches long depending upon the size of the bell. String a small seed bead to the center of the wire, give the wire a couple of twists, and run both ends of it up through a 1/4- to 1/2-inch bead depending upon the size of the bell. Add another seed bead, then twist the wire ends together for the length of the bell. Insert the two wire ends through the two holes in the tin can lid. Twist the wires together again, and attach them to a length of rug yarn.

Figure C, Illustration 10. The string of bells in Figure C differs from the ones in Figure B in that a number of bells, in graduated sizes, are attached to a single length of doubled rug yarn at 5- to 6-inch intervals. Tiny bows of baby ribbon are tied at the points of attachment. Four such strings of bells form Figure C, and again the knotted top is covered by a pom-pom bow in color to match the baby-ribbon bows.

Lengths of discarded jewelry chain or pull chains sold in hardware stores may be used instead of rug yarn.

For a door swag, short strings of bells made in the same manner, attached to a wreath or branch, and topped with a gay ribbon bow tinkle a musical welcome to holiday guests.

A long string of these bells hung high by the front door during the holiday season is certain to be a conversation piece. The bells, of course, also are appropriate for interior decoration.

