

Coffee Can Paper Ornaments by Darrell S. Ross

In one evening you and your children can create easy, colorful holiday ornaments using nothing more than a coffee can, window screen, cookie cutters, scrap pieces of colored paper and a blender. It's a great project that introduces children to papermaking, will add a special touch to your holiday decorating and is fun for everyone.

Blender

Coffee Can with plastic cover

Window screen, nylons or plastic mesh

Paper scraps, colored craft paper

Handy Wipes or felt pads

Sponge

Towels

Small bowls, dishpan

Plastic cup or dishes

Plastic forks, spoons and knives

Iron or hairdryer

Glue stick, 3-D Gel Pens, Glitter

To prepare the pulp we need to tear small pieces from your sheet of colored paper. The size of a quarter is good. You may put the pieces in a small bowl of water to soften and prepare them for the blender.

Next fill the blender about half full of water and add about a half sheet of torn paper. Blend at the lowest speed for 10 to 15 seconds. Then change to medium for another 10 seconds then high speed for another 10 to 15 seconds. By varying the speed of the blender you will help prevent it from overheating and binding up. If the blender seems to be having trouble then reduce the amount of paper you put in. After the pulp is blended pour it into the strainer that is sitting in a large bowl or plastic tub. (B) This helps drain the water so that you can put the pulp into a plastic cup or dish. Do this for each color that you would like to use.

Our next step is to make our "mold and deckle". This would be your coffee can and window screen. Take the plastic cover and punch holes into it. You can use a nail, ice pick or bookbinders awl. This plastic cover holds the screen in place on the bottom of the can.

Next cut a piece of your window screen about 3 inches larger than the size of the lid. A 8" square is a good size.

Lay your screen over the coffee can. Snap the lid tightly so the screen stays flat. Next fill your dish tub, baking dish or even a saucepan with about two inches of water. Insert your coffee can - screen side down - into the water and move it around until the water level rises. Scoop out some paper pulp from the color of your choice. The ideal amount is 4 -5 scoops and stir it around until it's evenly spread out over the screen. Lift it straight up and let it drain. Set the can down and gently pull the plastic lid off. Lift the screen out and turn it over onto your felt pad or handy wipe. Sponge the back of the screen and then gently lift the screen off.

Here's the fun part. Take your favorite cookie cutter and lay it on your wet piece of paper. And begin to fill the inside with the colored pulp of choice.

Gently lift the shape off and again lay the window screen over it and press with the sponge. At this point you may use a hair-dryer, iron or let it air dry. Repeat the process for the second side.

Once the pieces are dry you can decorate them with 3-D Gels, Glitter or crayons. Using a glue stick coat both sides, lay your string or ribbon in between and then press the pieces together. Two phonebooks are good.

