

# Everything in the Garden

## Stitched Metal for Outdoor Effects

### Maggie Grey

There is a gap in my garden where something has expired and I want to have a think about what is going there rather than rushing out to buy a replacement. It occurred to me (having seen some inspired use of metal at the Chelsea Flower Show) that large blooms made of metal shim would be colourful, weather resistant and would fill the hole nicely.

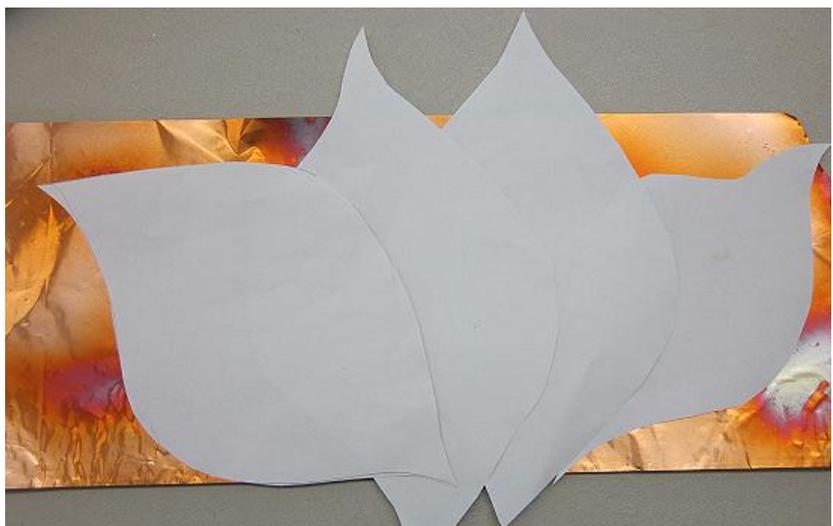
So I set out to make three bloomers for the bald spot. I was also quite interested to see what the elements would do to the metal (hoping for some rust here).

First a few general points about stitching on metal shim:

- Make sure that you use the fine shim that is suitable for stitching – I get mine from Oliver Twists [olivertwistsretail@fsmail.net](mailto:olivertwistsretail@fsmail.net). Purée tubes will work but you will need quite a lot.
- Always place the metal on felt or heavy Vilene. It stops the thread catching on metal edges and breaking.
- The metal can have sharp edges – beware.

For the flowers, start by cutting out a few paper petal shapes and wrap them together to give a rough idea of how they will work.

The metal will be more responsive to manipulation than the paper but it will give an idea of shape and size. They need to be eye catching, so big and bold is the order of the day.



Colour the metal by heating with a paint stripper or gas flame – even a candle will work but may take some time. Make sure that your metal is on a heatproof surface and that there is no paper or flammable material within range.

Don't worry if you are using purée tubes or have no way of heating – we will look at colouring options later.

Heat evenly all over to achieve a range of colours from copper to pink. If you overheat it just use the other side of the metal.

Cut out the petal shapes from the metal – you will need four or five.



Lay the metal leaf on black felt and stitch around the edges, leaving half a centimetre (quarter of an inch) as a seam allowance. Add a central line of stitch for added stability – see right.



Using a ballpoint pen or an embossing tool, draw patterns into the metal, as shown above, left and right.

Little circles always work well and are fun to do.



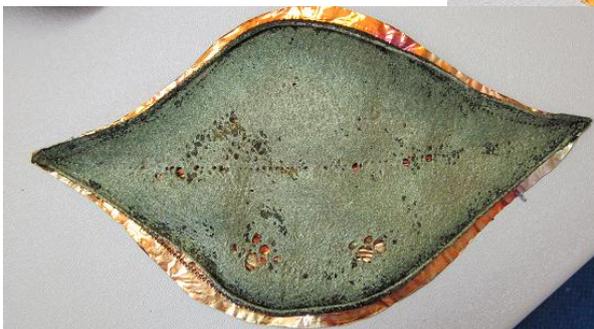
In order to age it and get rid of the shine, paint it with black acrylic paint pushing it down into the 'dip' and then wipe it off straightaway.

This leaves the paint in the bottom of the impression which looks distressed and adds oomph. See below.



Now turn it over and use a heat tool on the felt on the back. This will plasticise it and make the felt weather-proof.

Paint with acrylics; an interference colour such as the green I have used below could be interesting.



To finish the leaf, fold any surplus metal from the 'seam allowance' to the wrong side, as shown right.



When you have completed all your leaves, bunch them up together in your hand to see how they fit – see right.

Try several combinations. Bend the ends of the leaves to make a more interesting shape.

Divide the leaves into two groups for ease of handling. Stitch each group together by hand through the edges of the felt, for 2 in (5 cm) at the base (see pic bottom right).

It is easier to pin first – see close up.



When you have two groups of joined leaves, think about the 'stalk'. I have used a bamboo garden cane as a base. I was going to cut strips of metal to wrap it with when inspiration struck.

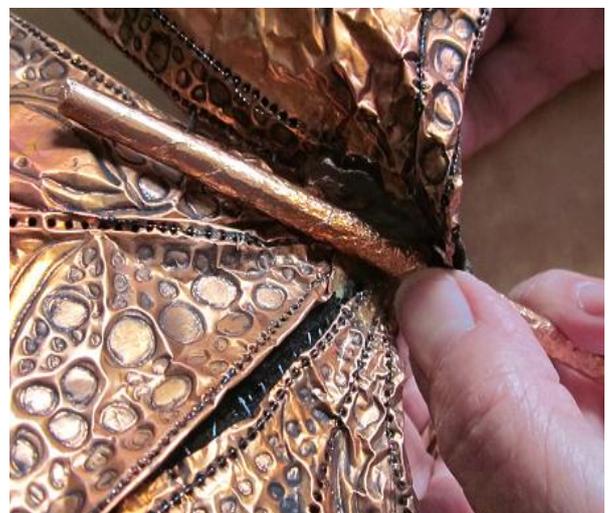
Slug tape is made from copper and is very easy to wind around the cane as it has a sticky backing. It can also be coloured by heat.

Just peel off the backing as you wrap the cane.



Place a group of leaves on baking paper and mould the bottoms so they are close together. Then squirt a good 'dollop' of glue onto the bottom of the leaves.

Press the stick into the glue, allowing a couple of inches to protrude above the gluey bit. This forms a stamen.



Note: it helps to have an assistant for the next bit as you need three arms.

Tie a piece of string around the base of the leaves (right) to hold it together while the glue dries. I have tried a clamp but the string works better. Remove string when glue is set.

Repeat the joining and gluing process for the final two leaves and attach to the three already on the stick as shown below right; tie with string as before.

I felt that more interest was need in the centre so made three 'mini' petals to fit in the middle. They were dropped in and glued.



There is, of course, no need to make such large outdoor flowers – a wonderful bouquet of any size, with any shaped petals – could be made following these instructions.



Maggie Grey is the editor of Workshop on the Web and the author of many books, the latest of which is Dissolvable Delights. As the name suggests this book gives lots of ideas for dissolvable film and paper. She also enjoys giving talks and demonstrations to Guilds and groups. Contact her by email. [maggie@workshopontheweb.com](mailto:maggie@workshopontheweb.com)

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