



Trashmagination Podcast #53 – Clementine Boxes

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

This week's episode is about clementine boxes. These are wooden boxes made from a lightweight wood and typically measure about 12 inches by 8 inches or 30 cm by 20 cm. They are usually held together by large staples.

When I was growing up, we didn't eat clementines. So when did clementines become a more common in North America? During the 1980s, Florida citrus growers suffered from a series of freezes that damaged their trees and crops¹. In December 1989, the freeze was especially bad. Many citrus farmers sold their land and gave up growing oranges. That opened up markets for the clementine, mostly grown in Europe. Many liked how easy they were to peel and seedless. They are just the right size for a kid's lunchbox.

So why are clementines sold in wooden crates? A clementine exporter named Jules Arnal noticed that people bought more clementines when they were sold in a gift box and tied with a bow. It was a way to differentiate clementines from other citrus fruits. It started as something for Christmas, but soon became something people purchased year-round.

But like all packaging – what are we going to make with it? I just came up with a project idea and I'm SO excited it worked! I have a lot of creative reuse ideas all the time and it's such a thrill when they work out.

First I'll tell you about my project and then I'll share other ideas that you can view on my Trashmagination Pinterest board for clementine boxes - <https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/clementine-boxes/>.

My Lenticular Photo Display / Business Card Holder from Clementine Boxes

Here's my project – it's called a Lenticular Photo Display / Business Card Holder. I had taken apart maybe 15 clementine boxes which provided wood in four shapes:

- large flat pieces on the bottom of the boxes,
- long skinny pieces along the sides,
- short pieces at the ends, and
- triangle pieces that hold the box together at the corners.

I wanted to find a fun project to use the triangle pieces. I had an idea to glue the triangle pieces to the flat side pieces and paint them in rainbow colors. My plan was to paint the words "family" or "creative reuse" on the triangles to make a wooden sign to display on the wall – and I might still do that project. But I was not sure how to put the letters on the triangles, so I asked my husband for his thoughts. That's when he told me about the concept of lenticular photos. Those are photos that are engineered so that when you look at them from one angle, they show one image, and when you change your angle, it shows a different image. Have you heard of that? It is a technique sometimes used in movie posters².

¹ <https://www.newstimes.com/news/article/Little-crate-changed-the-fate-of-the-clementine-82898.php>

² https://www.pinterest.com/shantal_h/lenticular-examples/

We talked about what types of photos might work in this project. To leverage the angle of the triangles, it made the most sense to use a photo that was more vertical than horizontal. I found magazine images as well as photos on photo paper. In terms of subject matter, it needed to be an image that made sense even if you could only see one slice at a time. It needed to be one big object rather than a busy photo or the human eye might not connect all the parts.

I started with the magazine images, but it didn't work that well. The triangle pieces from the clementine boxes are not perfectly flat. They have bumps and gouges in them from where the staples held the box together. When I glued the magazine pages to the triangles, it did not cover all these imperfections.

Next I tried it with the printed photographs. The photos I chose showed big flowers which I thought would be a nice subject matter if I gave this craft to my grandmother for her monthly gift. She is a great gardener and loves flowers. This worked much better. The photo paper was thicker and covered the imperfections of the wood. On one side of the triangles, I put a rose photo and on the other side, I put a crocus photo. I then painted the ends of the triangles dark green and glued it to one of the end pieces of the clementine box to hold the triangles together.

Just to note - I used Mod Podge to glue the photos to the triangles. I also put a layer of Mod Podge over the photos to make the whole project nice and shiny!

This is such a great example of how Trashmagination works! I save the materials until I have enough to do something interesting. I play with the materials. I propose an idea to my husband. He brings in an idea that is totally not related and much more mind-bending. I then try to implement the idea. It fails. I try another method, and it works.

I can see many uses for this project. I could make personalized gifts by taking photos of family and friends and putting it in this format. I could put a photo of a beloved family recipe on one side and then a photo of the food on the other side. Or it could be a baby photo on one side and the birth announcement on the other. Or wedding photo and invitation! Can you think of other ways to have fun with this design?

It's also a great business card holder! You can put your business cards at one end – maybe over a part of the photo that is not essential to view, or you could add an extra triangle just to hold the business cards.

Now I'll share ideas from the Trashmagination's Pinterest board for clementine boxes [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/clementine-boxes/>].

Decorating Ideas

Chalkboard-Paint Placecards – The blog Family Chic showed how to take the triangle shapes and paint them with chalkboard paint. Then they can be used as placecards on the dining room table [<http://cfabbridesigns.com/holidays/christmas/creating-with-clementine-crates>].

Tiny Chalkboard Signage – You can paint the flat pieces of the clementine box with chalkboard paint and attach string or ribbon to make little signs. This can be show instructions at a potluck dinner table or it can be a gift tag on a bottle of wine [<http://cfabbridesigns.com/holidays/christmas/creating-with-clementine-crates>].

Shadow Boxes – A shadow box allows you to frame three-dimensional items. The blog Pop Sugar made a shadow box by painting a clementine box with gold paint. They filled it with a magical winter scene made with cotton batting, tiny evergreen trees and white lights [<https://www.popsugar.com/home/DIY-Christmas-Shadow-Box-32658634>].

Gift Boxes – Clementine boxes can be a great way to put together “kits” for friends or teachers [<https://blah-to-tada.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-gracious-guest.html>]. For example, you could put all the ingredients to make a cocktail. Or cleaning items for a housewarming gift. Or baby items for a baby shower. You can paint the box in a color that matches the gift items. Or you can use Mod Podge to decorate the box with scrapbook paper. When people come to visit, you can fill a clementine box with items they might need and store it in your guest room. Another gift idea is to wrap up the triangles from clementine boxes as kindling for someone who has a fireplace or who likes to go camping.

Storage Ideas

Ribbon storage – By adding dowels, some crafters store ribbons in clementine boxes. You can roll out what you need.

Scissor Storage Box – Turn the box upside down and drill a hole big enough to let your scissors slide in. This could be especially helpful for a teacher or scrapbooker who has many shapes of scissor blades.

Add handles – A blog called Homestead and Gardens gave a clementine box a big upgrade by adding two dowels at each end to make nice handles. They also stained the box with a rustic brown stain

[<http://www.homesteadandgardens.com/the-cutie-crate-an-easy-repurposing-project/>] and called it a Cutie Crate.

Add burlap – If you want to creatively reuse your burlap rice bags, you can cover clementine boxes with burlap

[<http://delachic.blogspot.com/2012/06/covered-clementine-crate-tutorial.html>].

Shelves – I saw a LOT of examples of clementine boxes as shelves. Often this involved painting the bottom of the box in bright colors and putting them up as a collection [<http://www.muramur.ca/creer/projets-diy/7-idees-recycler-caisses-clementines-1.2216398>]. You can add a dowel to keep items from falling off the shelves too. Some people added these in bathrooms or laundry rooms.

Desk Organizers – Clementine boxes can stack on top of each other. You can take out one side of the box to make a file organizer. Or you can stack them and paint a word on the side to show what goes inside the box. They can be used to hold fruits and vegetables which do better outside of the fridge such as tomatoes, onions, melons and potatoes.

Greenhouse – You can grow plants in clementine boxes

[<https://knittinandnoodlin.wordpress.com/2008/05/31/clementine-box-seed-nursery-a-tutorial/>]. Some people add a plastic canopy to make it more like a greenhouse, but many plants grow well without it.

Toy Ideas

Doll Bed - Back in episode 34, I talked about making dollhouse furniture from recycled materials. A clementine box makes a great doll bed because it fits most dolls [<http://www.funinthemaking.net/category/reuse-clementine-box/>]. Sew a little mattress, quilt and pillow, and the box already looks like a four-poster bed. You could even add a canopy.

Doll Couch - I also saw tutorials for making a doll-sized couch from clementine box

[<http://agdollplay.blogspot.com/2013/03/doll-craft-clementine-box-to-doll-couch.html>].

Doll Table – Turn a clementine box upside down to make a doll-sized table. You can paint it or cover it with a tablecloth. You can even make little place mats as a family craft.

Toy Car Garage – You can make a toy car storage center by putting toilet paper rolls into a clementine box until it is completely full. Then your child can put a car into each little parking spot

[<https://www.buzzfeed.com/morganshanahan/clever-storage-solutions-for-living-with-kids>].

Color sorting game – A website called Still Playing School made a color match game from a clementine box

[<http://www.stillplayingschool.com/2014/02/color-sorting-box.html>]. They turned the box upside down and circled the holes in the base with different colors of marker. The kids dropped tiny pompoms or beads into the holes that matched the color, using chopsticks.

Ring toss game – A website called Brit+Co made a ring game by putting a bunch of bottles in a clementine box

[<https://www.brit.co/diy-outdoor-games/>]. The kids throw rings to see they could get it around the bottle.

Thank you!

Thank you for listening! I would love to hear how you creatively reuse clementine boxes at trashmagination@gmail.com.

Until next time – may you see clementine boxes as a source of art in your life!