



Julie McEntire began making metal roses about 10 years ago. Although it started as a hobby, she now sells them at shows in Elko and Wells.

Photos by Sarah Spratling

# Ghost Town Roses of Nevada

*Julie McEntire creates artistic flower arrangements from discarded rusty cans*

**By Dianna Troyer**

For decades, the idea of making flowers and other home decor from rusty tin cans kept nagging at Julie McEntire.

“The idea first ran through my mind about 40 years ago, but I never had the time to work on it,” says the 72-year-old Pilot Valley resident.

She knew there were plenty of cans at nearby ghost towns and old dumps.

About 10 years ago, she finally had the time to transform the idea into reality.

“My mom could always make something beautiful from nothing, so that inspired me,” Julie says.

She drove to an abandoned dump about 3 miles from her home and picked up a few cans. She still has the first flower she made.

“It looks like a big chocolate mess,” Julie says. “They evolved over time. I decided to make roses because they’re my favorite flower and remind me of my grandfather’s flower garden.”

Some of her favorite roses decorating

her living room are sentimental and not for sale. Julie says they remind her not only of her grandfather, but of her mother’s ingenuity.

When Julie first started, she made the roses for herself.

“I thought they were beautiful,” she says. “Then friends told me I should sell them at craft shows. They gave me good advice.”

Julie’s tin-can roses sell quickly at shows in Elko, Wells and other places. She printed business cards with the name of her hobby: Ghost Town Roses of Nevada.



**Clockwise from above, Julie uses needle-nose pliers to create rose petals. Her metal bouquets come from hand-cut templates in her workshop. A wall in Julie's home is filled with roses and other artwork she will not sell because of their sentimental value.**

"I've had people look at them and tell me they're so lifelike that they didn't realize they were made from old cans," Julie says.

Roses range from the size of a quarter to about 5 or 6 inches across.

"I usually put two on barbed wire, old barn wood or white bark from river birch," she says.

Julie rummages through abandoned dumps and old settlements near her home for material.

"I look for suitable material and put it in the back of my truck," she says. "The cans have to be the right thickness. If they're too thick, they're too hard to bend. I like a certain patina, too, that only the weather can create."

She prefers using old MJB coffee cans

because they were once green, and the color still shows in some places.

At home in her shop, Julie cuts the cans into workable forms. Next she uses pliers to turn up the edges of the metal into the shape of petals. Depending on the pattern and materials, she attaches them in different ways to form a rose.

"My brother gave me a pop rivet gun, so I'm going to experiment and see how well that works to hold them together," she says.

When Julie is satisfied with a rose, she sprays it with a shiny lacquer to keep any tiny rust particles from falling off.

She works on a batch of flowers for two to three days, making about 10 in a day.

"It's time consuming but fun," Julie says. "I've always loved making

something out of nothing."

She says her floral hobby is relaxing.

"It gets me out walking around," Julie says. "You never know what you'll find or where a dirt road might lead."

She says the solitude of northeastern Nevada appeals to her.

"When I moved to Pilot Valley, I told the builder to make sure my living room window faces Pilot Peak," Julie says.

"Every morning, I sit down and have coffee with the mountain. It's a great way to start the day."

While sitting there, she plans her day and whether to make another batch of flowers. Sometimes she makes other home décor, such as mirrors.

"I still love making the roses," Julie says. "I'll never run out of cans around here." ■