



Photo by John Cushman

## Garden Railroading eNews No.1 Nov/Dec 2020

### **Seasons Greetings and welcome to the first edition of GRNews.**

Over 80 GR clubs in the US, Canada and overseas have agreed to distribute GRNews to their members. You can find a list of those clubs on our website: [www.GRNews.org](http://www.GRNews.org) — If you don't see your club on the list, complete a simple form on the website to help us establish contact with your club.

The many Garden Railroaders who do not belong to a club can get GRNews from our [www.GRNews.org](http://www.GRNews.org) website, and everyone can get more news on our Facebook Group at: [www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews](https://www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews)

GRNews is a volunteer initiative, started just five months ago. Modest operating costs will be covered by modest advertising rates as our vendors are critical to our hobby's future.

We are delighted with the support received from the GR community to date and hope you enjoy this collection of articles. Please share the GRNews and spread our hobby.

**May your Holidays be joyful and safe!**

# In This Issue

<b>View from the Cab: Spreading G-Scale Cheer: Al's Garden Center Christmas Display by Bill Derville</b>	<b>3</b>
Seasonal Article from: Rose City Garden Railway Society	
<b>May We Suggest Something New: New Products &amp; News by Carla Brand Breitner</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Gold Coast Station Tehachapi 9th Annual Open House: PIKO, LGB &amp; Bachmann Displays by Carla Brand Breitner</b>	<b>8</b>
Article from: Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club Newsletter October 2020	
<b>Featured Layout: The Too Much Fun RR • TMFRR— An Eclectic Garden Railroad for All Ages by Vic &amp; Sue Thies</b>	<b>10</b>
Members of Orange County Garden Railway Society & multiple other clubs	
Go to <b>www.GRNews.org</b> for a <b>GReNews EXTRA: All Aboard!</b> A Visual Ride Thru the TMFRR Helix Line	
<b>GVGRC Portable Sectional Layout Meet 8-20-20 by John Shortreid</b>	<b>14</b>
Article from: Greater Vancouver Garden Railway Club Burnt Journal October 2020	
<b>From the NMGR Editor: Extreme Rust Weathering by Vance Bass</b>	<b>16</b>
Article from: New Mexico Garden Railroaders Newsletter October 2020	
<b>October Aresenault Meet: A Turntable, Multiple Engines by Gary Olmstead</b>	<b>17</b>
Photo from: Gold Coast Garden Railway Society Flyer November 2020	
<b>My Concrete Village by Pete Comley</b>	<b>19</b>
Article from: Puget Sound Garden Railway Society Garden Railroading October 2020	

<b>Really 'Warm' LED Lighting by Mick Spilsbury</b>	<b>23</b>
Article from: Bay Area Garden Railway Society Trellis & Trestle March 2018	
<b>Photo Contest Winner: A Short Freight on the Northern Valley RR by Sue Cortese</b>	<b>24</b>
Photo from: Long Island Garden Railway Society Smoke & Cinders September 2020	
<b>Plant of the Month: Dwarf Jasmine by Richard Murray</b>	<b>25</b>
Article from: Bay Area Garden Railway Society Trellis & Trestle October 2020	
<b>Creating Interesting Store Fronts by Roberta Fleishman</b>	<b>27</b>
Article from: Orange County Garden Railway Society Gazette October 2020	
<b>Kitbashing a Birdhouse into a Log Cabin by Carla Brand Breitner</b>	<b>30</b>
Article from: Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club Newsletter August 2020	
<b>Gandy Dancers: Georgia GRS Members Convert Bird Houses to Tiny Homes</b>	<b>31</b>
Article from: Georgia Garden Railway Society Gazette October 2020	
<b>What Members Have Been Up To...</b>	<b>32</b>
Article from: Inland Northwest Garden Railway Society News September 2020	
<b>Straight from the Iron Horse's Mouth: Letters to the Editor &amp; Answers from our Authors</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Ad Index</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Affiliated Clubs</b> (as of 11/27/20)	
Check our website: <a href="http://www.GRNews.org">www.GRNews.org</a> for an up-to-date Club List.	

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or [www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews](http://www.facebook.com/groups/gardenrailroadingenews)



# Spreading G-Scale Cheer: Al's Garden Center Christmas Display

by Bill Derville

Photos by Bill Derville unless otherwise noted  
Rose City Garden Railway Society

For the past dozen years, Rose City Garden Railway Society has built a Christmas display G-Scale railroad for Al's Garden Center–Sherwood, a large local nursery. In turn, several of Al's stores sell booklet/tickets for our *Railroads in the Garden Summer Tour*, a tour of many of the club's layouts that are open to the public on the Saturday before Father's Day in June.

Al's provides the tables and a few LGB Christmas cars they own, and the club provides an LGB Mogul with the club's name and logo on the tender, track, a track cleaning car, a transformer, and all scenery. The track, along with bridges, trees, and a few buildings, are stored at the store when not in use. Club members bring buildings, water tanks, tunnel portals, vehicles, people, animals and other items and take them home when the layout is dismantled after Christmas.

*continued middle of next page*



*The tall trestle proudly displays the name of our club. The engine is provided by the club, but Al's Garden Center pays for all repairs and refurbishment.*



*Department 56 buildings create a forced perspective of distance behind the lake made from a mirror. Models of Al's Garden Center store and greenhouses were custom built by club members Hal Beighley and Ron Tweet.*



*Cliff castings anchor snow blanket. Crushed rock ballast lines track.*

Photo by Robert Harmen



Rose City Garden Railway Society  
Portland, Oregon



This picture shows the layout of the tables, the Christmas tree, and the track with roadbed which is made of particle board. Notice the track is set on 2"x6" precut to the same length to keep the track level and allows the scenery to extend below the level of the track. The uprights are not attached to the table, but the roadbed is screwed to the uprights. The track is held together with Split Jaw Clamps for good conductivity. The track is screwed to the roadbed.



The trestle was hand built by Gary Lee. Stepping stones support the bents on both sides. Thumb tacks are used to attach the snow blanket to the bottom of the bents. Zan Zweerts, on platform, is arranging box supports and attaching wire mesh with a stapler to support the snow blanket and give the mountains shape.



The club sets up the display around the first of November, just before Al's huge Christmas *Evening of Lights* weekend; so many people attend that police are needed to direct traffic in and out of their parking lot. It takes 8 to 12 club members about 6 hours to extract all the stored items from storage and set up the layout. The layout measures 15 feet by 25 feet.

The scenery is supported by boxes which Al's keeps for various displays during the year. Snow blanket over the boxes create mountains and tunnels. Scenery includes a decked-out Christmas tree which is placed in the center of the mountains. Rock molds

purchased from Joel Bragdon were used to create the cliff scene used to anchor the snow blanket. Al's marquee stands out among the Christmas Village store fronts. Even a (mirror) lake sometimes appears. Once the scenery is in place, we sprinkle on ballast made from real crushed rock.

The train only runs when a button is pushed by a guest, keeping the engine from wearing out. Still the engine requires maintenance and sometimes needs to be replaced with a second engine during repairs. Al's pays for the snow blanket, snow, and all equipment repairs. Club members provide the

*continued middle of next page*

Press the green button to start the train. Plants will go around the display to keep visitors a few feet from the layout.



The author is arranging the crates that will support the scenery. Every year the display is put together a little differently making each layout a slightly new creation.



Crates from the garden center are used to support the scenery and form the roof for the tunnel. The snow blanket will hang over the boxes on the right giving us access to the tunnel when necessary. A black towel is put over the tunnel under the snow blanket to keep the tunnel dark.



Photo by Robert Harmen





Gary Lee, NMRA Master Model Railroader, and wife Jonette (in background), Penny Walker (center), and Jen Eckardt (left) are working on adding the snow blanket and snow to the scene. We purchase more than a full roll of fresh snow blanket from a fabric store every year.



The scenery and tunnels change every year based on the arrangement of the supporting boxes. But the use of bridges and track plan remain the same every year.



Trees will be set out on the layout supported by the box substructure.

labor for repairs and build the layout at no charge.

A stand offers viewers a button to run the train for one minute and a supply of fliers about our next Summer Tour and about our club. Usually 350 or more are taken by visitors.

The Rose City Garden Railway Society has grown every year since this display has been built. It is one of many reasons our club size has doubled to 140 members in the last six years, showing that every outreach helps build our club and the hobby. Due to Covid-19, this will be the first year the layout has not been constructed in the past 10 years, but it is expected to return next year.



Photo by Robert Harmen

The 2019 Christmas Display was a hit. Below observers follow the train.



Photo by Robert Harmen



This trestle, donated to the club a few years ago, is now used to extend the layout off the end of the table. Built on a plywood stand, it can be carried by two people. It is stored in the store's attic along with track, roadbed, cars, trees, the stand with the "start" button, and some structures.



Photo by Robert Harmen



Photo by Robert Harmen







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*Lighted tree on front of engine*



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*MAY  
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Something New*



## Upgraded Wireless Throttle Control for Bridgewater Power Controllers

Bridgewater has released the ROAMER, a wireless remote throttle control. This upgraded replacement for their RC-100 remote features an enhanced range, a die-cast aluminum case, and an emergency stop function. The ROAMER will plug into the back of any of the Bridgewater controllers except for the Morrison, and provides wireless control over the throttle with a pocket sized keyfob remote transmitter.

Our club, Santa Clarita Valley Garden Railroad Club, like many

others, sometimes runs a train display at a public event that draws a crowd of kids. Our Bridgewater controller powers a track effortlessly for the whole day. We have used the RC-100 to change speed sometimes, but could have used the emergency stop feature several times over the years. The aluminum case should be sturdier than the plastic case on the earlier remote. It appears that Bridgewater has successfully improved one of their products.

— Editor

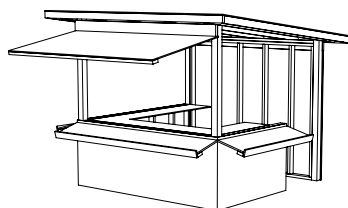
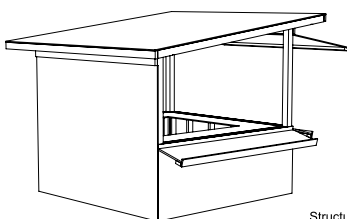
Fans of model live steam should know that Accucraft & affiliates have a new website: [LiveSteamStation.com](http://LiveSteamStation.com)

White River Productions has announced a Garden Trains Annual coming in April 2021. Pre-orders will be accepted at: [gardentrainsannual.com](http://gardentrainsannual.com).



## Coming to the next Garden Railroading eNews: 1/29 scale plans for a roadside produce stand... or a contemporary reuse adaptation.

Plans courtesy of and drawn by Mike Collyer from the Central Ontario (Canada) Garden Railway Association *Rails & Weeds*



Structure with Optional Front Awning and exterior 16" Shelves





## Gold Coast Station Tehachapi 9th Annual Open House

PIKO brought stacks of track and switches that were already disappearing on the first of three days at great sale prices.

Here Jonathan Meador of PIKO speaks with Gold Coast GRS member, George Arsenault.



Bachmann brought an AT&SF example of their new livestock cars. Horses bob in and out of the Santa Fe car, also available for C&NW and Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey.



LGB brought their new AT&SF Super Chief EMD F7A and B units with digitally controlled light and sound. The stainless steel of the original engines is replicated with chrome plating before painting the locomotive in AT&SF colors. The plating progression of copper, then nickel, then chrome is shown below.



Not shown were animated cattle riding in D&RGW or CB&Q stock cars. For Christmas, Reindeer Transport Express cars carry animated reindeer for the North Pole & Southern RR.

Bachmann also brought their First Responder Eggliners, complete with flashing roof lights. The Halloween Jack-o-liner and Santa's Sleigh-liner sat near a Lady Bug and Bumble Bee.





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# PIKO



# TMFRR • The Too Much Fun Railroad • Vic & Sue Thies, Proprietors

## Railway at a Glance

Name: **TooMuchFun Railroad**

Website: **toomuchfunrailroad.com**

Size: **60' wide x 25' deep x 15' high**

Scale: **varies from 1:24 to O- scale used for forced perspectives**

Gauge: **G-scale plus a small N-scale railroad within a railroad**

Era: **From ancient medieval times to modern day**

Age: **10 years**

Power: **All 11 lines are track powered with multiple Bridgewater transformers; Lighting circuits are powered by a 12-volt DC 50-amp Astron power supply**

Total track length of 11 lines (3 overhead and 8 garden): **approximately 1,800'**

Type of track: **Mainly LGB & USA sectional, some Train-li-USA and LGB flex track**

Min diameter: **4' (Fairy Garden line 2')**

Max diameter: **8'**

Max grades: **3.5% on the "L" loop and 30% on the helix lines**

Structures: **Custom structures from Rainbow Ridge and kits from many of the G-Scale companies**

Lighting: **Over 98% of the 50,000 lights are LED with some incandescent street-lamps spread throughout the layout**

### Some of the Plants on the TooMuchFun RR

Cuphea hyssopifolia

- **White false heather**

Thymus Serpyllum

- **"Pink Chintz" Thyme**

Chamlawsoniana Ellwoods Gold Pillar

Podocypus **"Peking"**

Juniperus procumbens

- **Dwarf Japanese Juniper**

Cotoneaster glaucophyllus

- **Cotoneaster Gray**

**Variegated English Boxwood**

Olea Europaea - **Olive "San Fernando"**

Coprosma - **"Rainbow Surprise"**

Myrsine - **"African Boxwood"**

Punica granatum - **"Nama"**

## An Eclectic Garden Railroad for All Ages

More about the TMFRR can be found in a GReNews Extra at [www.grnews.org](http://www.grnews.org)



### How it all got started

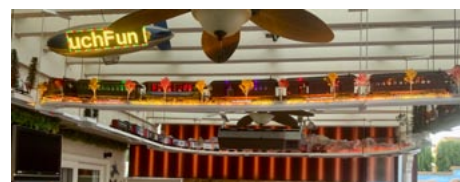
Our TooMuchFun RR adventure began in 2010 when we bought an overhead suspended layout system for our covered patio from Gold Coast Station after watching trains pass through the famous Tehachapi Loop, an amazing helix.

We rushed home to install it and, five months of installation later, we had learned that in this hobby nothing goes as quickly as initially anticipated.

The 150 foot loop travels around the covered patio with a siding through the house into the family room, where two additional yard tracks allow for parking of various consists waiting to be dispatched. An additional double-track suspended system in our family room allows for the running of up to three trains when outside weather is questionable.

### Initial Design Concepts and Challenges

When we began planning for a true garden railroad in our limited space, a typical Southern California tract home backyard, our first challenge was to define our railroad; should we choose a specific era in time, a geographical



*The suspended rail line over the patio extends into the family room.*

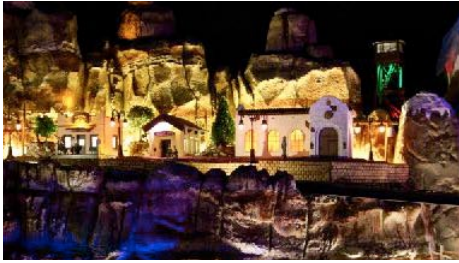


area of the world and its trains, a consistent "scale" within G-scale or just have TooMuchFun? We reflected on one of the most popular and diverse train rides in the world, the Disneyland Railroad and its travels to multiple themed areas. We decided **not** to limit ourselves, but to have an extremely



eclectic layout similar to Walt Disney's Disneyland RR.

With that in mind, we started designing and building our garden TMFRR "on the fly." Over the last ten years, we have added dozens of scenes and themes from childhood memories, past travels, and ideas from visiting layouts throughout the country. To allow the fun to continue after dark, we added lighting to every building, landscape area and scene.



Our uphill-sloped backyard posed design and construction challenges, but after visiting a layout partially built on a similar slope, we decided to create a 3D diorama look to the TMFRR by adding 15 feet of height.

### The Thoughts Behind the TMFRR

We read numerous instructional books/magazines, bought as many past issues of Garden Railways Magazine as possible, watched "how to" videos and asked lots of questions of club members.

We realized the following design concepts were important to us:

- Each track should have its own separate line and power supply.
- Everything (track lines, scenery, hard-scape) is to be constructed to 30 inches or higher for easier access, maintenance and better viewing.
- Have multiple levels of tracks and scenes and include the slope area.
- Not restrict ourselves to any geographical area, era or theme.
- Be able to run and enjoy the layout during darkness.
- Build with more emphasis on scenery and themes than on garden plants.
- Build the railroad to last using solid construction techniques.
- Have TooMuchFun with the railroad!



*Solid construction techniques allow for years of enjoyment.*

With these concepts in mind, we began what would turn out to be a multi-year process of building and adding new areas to the TMFRR.

### Construction Techniques

Working with sectional track, ropes, marking paint and cardboard cutouts of building footprints, we began the long process of laying out the basic track designs. After raising the valley or flat portion of the railroad with over 100 cubic yards of dirt, we used the "Split Jaw" PVC roadbed system.

This allowed us to easily add and hide an extensive drip & mist system, as well as electrical wires for track power and accessory lighting.

Numerous metal bridges for several raised lines were ordered from Eaglewings Iron Craft.

We hired a very talented local concrete sculpturing artist who had never worked on a garden railroad before (his area of expertise was concrete grottos, waterslides, ponds and such) to construct rock walls, tunnels and a four level helix to raise the train up to the slope area. We would eventually hire him four more times as we added to the TMFRR.



*Building up the concrete Utah-look Red Rock Canyon and mountains.*



We recommend extensive research into construction techniques that work for you, your climate and weather, and the durability of your layout. Our approximately 1,500 feet of garden railroad track (eight garden lines) rests on metal bridges, concrete or the PVC roadbed system; nothing is on dirt or unstable ground.

Murals bookend both ends of the layout, with the north side reflecting a medieval dragon theme and the south side extending the mountain and valley scenery.



### Controlling It All

Knowing our limited electronics expertise, our home electrician, Kevin, offered to design and build a portable roll-around control center to run the eight garden trains and all accessories. All components, including two large 80-wire harnesses connecting the control center to the layout, were built to industrial/military grade specs. This will hopefully allow for many years of worry-free use. Multiple Bridgewater transformers power the train tracks.

The original concept was to have around 10 to 12 lighting and accessory circuits. As we discussed the lighting plans, Kevin made a suggestion (for which I am



*The fun continues after dark as both static and color-changing lights come on.*

thankful) to increase the number of fuse protected circuits to forty so as to quickly identify a "short-circuit" based on a geographical area. While the number of "shorts" has been minuscule, this has been a huge time saver when a short has occurred.

An Astron 50-amp power supply provides pure 12-volt DC current to all the lighting and accessories for the entire layout, maintaining clean and flicker-free DC power to the thousands of LEDs. Low cost, but durable, variable DC to DC voltage reducers placed inside weather-proof plastic boxes reduce voltages for animated circus rides, sound effects and specialty lights.

### TMFRR Description

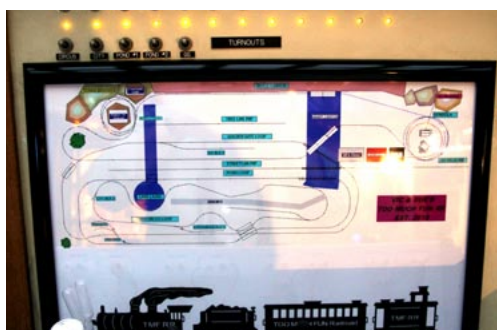
The TMFRR consists of approximately 1,800 feet of track spread out over eight garden lines and three suspended railroads. Having

an eclectic multi-themed layout doesn't restrict us to steam, diesel or a certain railroad line. We enjoy changing the overhead trains on a weekly basis. The TMFRR runs everything from Disney, Peanuts and whimsical trains to more traditional passenger and freight consists.

There are over 250 buildings and structures made of various materials within 15 different theme areas. Desiring unique buildings not available through traditional suppliers, we discovered Rainbow Ridge and their Precision Board buildings. This material is extremely durable and lightweight. Many of our buildings are "one of a kind" and add tremendous and unique character to the TMFRR.

**For Video Tours  
and Information**  
[www.toomuchfunrailroad.com](http://www.toomuchfunrailroad.com)

For the rest of the TMFRR story, go to [www.GRnews.org](http://www.GRnews.org) for a GReNews Extra



*Track Diagram*



*The TMFRR Control Center*



*Lighting Circuits Panel*





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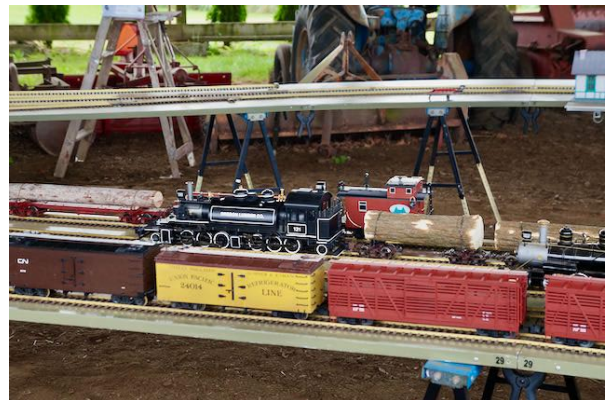




# GVGRC Portable Sectional Layout Image Taken On August 20th, 14

By Your Club's Burnt Journal Editor John Shortreid

Several of the Club's senior (meaning in age only) members got together for a reserved morning running on the Sectional Layout. A special thanks to Norm Lang & John Lecky for organizing these events for the older (but wiser) Club members. Note: the Club's COVID - 19 rules were applied....







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## FROM THE EDITOR

NEW MEXICO GARDEN RAILROADERS NEWSLETTER

Vance Bass

Spring has come and gone, summer has come and gone. The Fall Equinox has passed. Where the hell did this year go? Well, I hope we're all getting some things done while we're cooped up in our workshops and spare bedrooms. This is what we have all been dreaming about, right?

I'll pass along a technique I've (re)discovered lately: to put a rusty finish on plastic or non-ferrous metal, take some iron filings (cast iron is best, or mild steel, or steel wool, but not tool or stainless steel) and put them into a jar with some vinegar, some salt, and some water. Exact amounts are not critical. Stir it up to make a sludge. Let it sit for a week or two and you'll have a lovely black goo. You can add more water or vinegar later, if needed, to make it more spreadable.

To apply, pour a little out into a plastic cup (I save polypropylene cups from cough medicine bottles and one-serving applesauce). Add a few drops of PVA glue to make it stick, then stir. Brush it on with a brush you don't mind getting gunky.

It looks best when applied over gray or oxide red primer. In your goo, there will be dark juice, and there will be chunks (depending on how coarse your iron filings are). Apply the juice with or without chunks, depending on how much aging you want to show. The chunks really give it a nice, corroded texture. When dry, the black goo will turn rusty brown, then pick up some orange.



*This truck was an ordinary Bachmann black plastic item. I painted it oxide red and brushed it with the solution described above. It matches the heavily rusted undercarriage of this dump car perfectly.*

Vance





## Arsenault Meet by Gary Olmstead



## Sunset Valley Railroad

### The world's most comprehensive code 250 track system

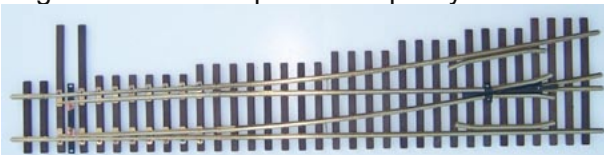
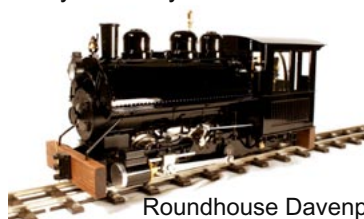
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## My Concrete Village

*Photos and article by Pete Comley*

Buildings are a nice addition to any garden railroad, and many of our layouts have a town nestled among the shrubbery. To cater for this there are several companies that offer a range of buildings suitable for the outdoors, made from weather and U-V resistant plastics. They are mostly of German design (Pola etc.) with a few US structures, also they are nearly all in 1:22.5 scale, costing \$100-200 each. Sadly, there are no buildings I know of offered in 1:32 scale which would be the size I am looking for. I have also seen many home-made buildings, and a lot of work goes into them as well. These are usually wood because it is the easiest to work with. One issue I believe is that these are not totally weatherproof and will disintegrate over time with the effects of rain, frost, and sun. At the NGRC in Santa Clara in 2016 I attended a presentation on making your own designed buildings out of concrete using a kit in which you made the walls one at a time in 1/2" thick concrete reinforced with 1/4" metal mesh (landscape fabric). I tried a couple of times making a small building but found it messy and labor intensive, so I gave up.

What I did instead was to try a solid concrete building, in this case a platelayer's hut. I made a casting mold from 1" plywood and lined it with sheet plastic brick glued the 'wrong' side against the wood, figure 1. I cut a piece of 1/8" hardboard for the door which would be inset in the wall on the model to give it some depth. I sprayed everything with 3-in-1 oil, and because I wasn't sure how well regular concrete would fill in all the fine detail of the brickwork I used 'Vinyl Concrete patch', which is basically a mortar mix with a plastic binder. It comes in 20 lb. buckets. The model is cast upside down so the top of the casting is the base of the model.

After casting I vibrated the mold by pressing an orbital sander, sans disk, against a side, it was highly effective in filling all the corners and letting bubbles rise to the top. After 2

days I de-molded and was pleased with the result, it reproduced the brickwork well( *Photo 1.*)



*Photo 1*

After a week I painted the whole with gray exterior house paint, then painted the brickwork red using a foam painting tool very lightly dipped in the paint. I made 8 of these that summer and put them out around my train layout. After 4 years outside in the Pacific NW climate they have all survived very well, no damage to any of them.

Buoyed by this and trying to find something to do in the Covid shutdown I decided to try something larger. I made 3 molds shown in Photo 2 (*on next page*) and decided to keep the walls flat rather than line them with brick or stone detail. I also made the buildings somewhat narrower front to back than they should be, because even in 1:32 scale they would be bulky and heavy. I used kerosene as the parting agent and a bag of regular concrete rather than the concrete patch.

*Continued on next page.*

Page 19

Puget Sound Garden Railroading

October 2020

Garden Railroading eNews Bonus Photo



Signal box and water tower, made from the same mold.

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*Continued from previous page.*



*Photo 2*

I made doors and windows and glued them against the wood sides. Concrete takes some time to cure, 2-3 days minimum and 28 to fully harden. I demolded after 4 days, as before.

Disaster! For whatever reason, the concrete did not cure properly and crumbled off any sharp corners and even some of the flat sides (Photo 3) possibly due to it reacting to the kerosene? Also, the door and window forms stuck to the concrete.



*Photo 3*

What to do? I ordered a water based parting agent used in industry that is painted onto the wood prior to casting. This worked out better but was not wholly satisfactory, especially as it was rather expensive. Concrete still pulled off tiny slivers of wood as I made more castings off each mold, and eventually the wood surface was quite rough, (Photo 4) but it was an improvement over the original runs and I suppose it gave the surface some texture. Always look for the silver lining!



*Photo 4.*

I also gave up on casting doors and windows into the mold, instead using a technique that is often used on real buildings, especially in Europe. It is called Trompe l'oeil (pronounced trump loy, French for 'deceive the eye') where they paint windows and doors onto a flat wall to make it look like the rest of the building. Photo 5 shows one such example, a flat wall facing the photographer, with trompe l'oeil balconies, pot plants, people, etc. painted on, and just the straight shadow of the sun across the top balcony giving it away!



*Photo 5.*

Being somewhat impatient I didn't want to wait 4 days between castings and so used quickset concrete instead. It is supposed to harden in 10 minutes, however I waited one day before demolding and this worked out fine. After a week of casting I had about 20 buildings, total cost \$15. By varying the amount of pour in the mold I could make buildings of different heights. I still waited a week before painting all with a garage floor paint, I wanted them to be completely waterproof, then painting them to suit with house paint.

*Continued on next page.*

Page 



*Continued from previous page.*

Home Depot sells small pots of house paint to your choice of color for about \$3, I find these are ideal. The roofs are cut from pieces of composition roofing tile glued on upside down with Henry's roofing cement, and I made a small RTV mold for the chimneys and cast those in resin. Photo 6 shows a row of workers cottages, these were quite common all over Britain. Photo 7 is the vicarage; next year it will have sedum greenery around it. Photo 8 is the wool merchant's house, the most prosperous in the village. Photo 9 is the village hall, made from 2 castings end to end. Photo 10 is the village as it stands today.

The whole idea of this was to have a 1:32 scale village that can be kept outside year-round without degradation and I hope this is one such answer. The buildings cost less than a dollar each, they weigh around 2-12 lbs. so won't blow over, and look just fine when observing the '10 ft rule'. Maybe one day I'll splash out on another \$5 bag of quickset and make some more!



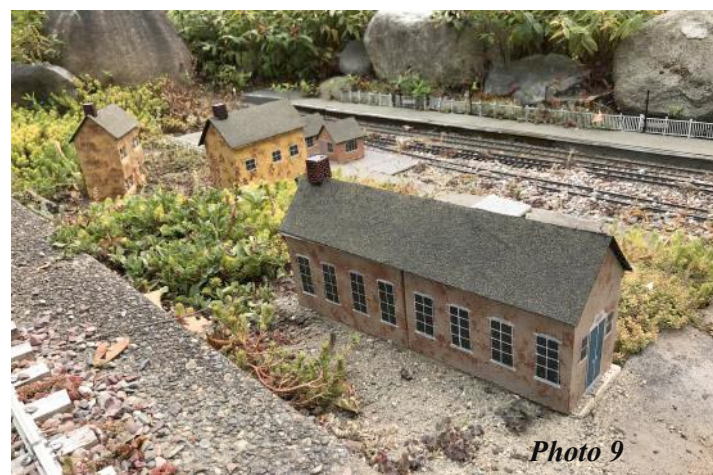
*Photo 6.*



*Photo 7*



*Photo 8*



*Photo 9*



*Photo 10.*

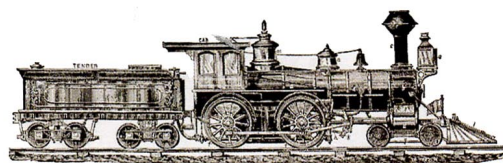




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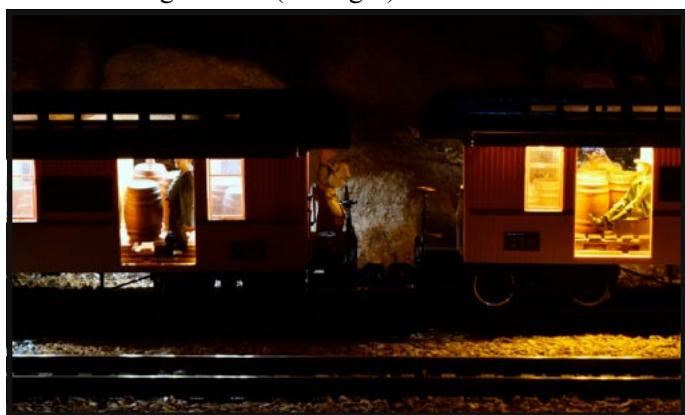
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## Really 'Warm' Led Lighting

From **Mick Spilsbury** aka Baron Spilsbury -- The BCDM&RRC is designed to operate at night and it was time to update the lighting in 9 passenger cars. In December, their 25-year-old lights powered by wheel brushes were replaced with LED strips powered by ball-bearing wheels.

All BDM&RRC locos have been converted to battery power, so track power is used solely for car lighting & sounds, and everything operates best on full power. Over Christmas, I decided that I loved the even light emitted by the LED strips, but not the stark white-light effect emitted - stark white even though the LEDs were 'warm white'. One month later, lighting has been adapted to provide a warmer, softer glow, as shown in the before-and-after image below (left/right).



The change was achieved by mounting colored Perspex over the LED strips. For those who might want to adjust their car lighting, this is how I went about it.

1. Orange Perspex was sourced from Tap Plastics, cut to size. Each cut piece cost me \$1
2. Mounts are trimmed NM Cable Wood Staples.



3. GE 100% Silicone Sealant was used to adhere the mounts to the roof of the cars and, also, to adhere the Perspex strips to the mounts leaving enough space between the LEDs and the Perspex for heat from the LEDs to escape.



4. Walls of the privies were cut to accommodate the Perspex strips. They were cut at the cistern inset using small pliers, then the tabs that insert into the window assembly were glued in place. The placement of the lights could be adjusted to avoid the necessity for this, but my LED strips were already firmly affixed.



5. All the tools and supplies used are shown below. They are set out on the raised wood platform used to support the roofs during installation. I use the watchmaker's screwdriver to 'spoon' the Silicone Sealant. RapidFuse is my glue of choice for smaller adhesion spots. A set of Niji tools comes in useful for all sorts of tasks - like prying the protective paper off Perspex strips!





## Photo Contest Winner



This month's winning photo "A Short Freight" was taken by Sue Cortese of their layout The Northern Valley RR



SMOKE N' CINDERS

Long Island Garden Railway Society

Page 24



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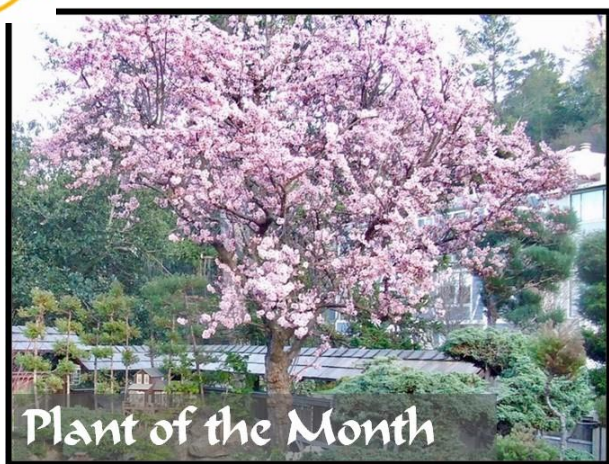
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Plant of the Month

-- By Richard Murray

COMMON NAME: Dwarf jasmine

BOTANICAL NAME: *Jasminum parkeri*

USDA HARDINESS ZONE: 7a (down to 0 degrees F)

SUNSET ZONE: 9, 12-24



#### DESCRIPTION

*Jasminum parkeri* is one of the prettiest dwarf shrubs in my garden. It develops a profusion of cheerful yellow flowers in late spring and early summer. Its flowers are trumpet shaped with 5 petals. Although I have never tried to sniff the flowers for fragrance, some reports are that the flowers have a sweet fragrance. Other reports say that there is no fragrance. Buy the plant and check out its fragrance for yourself. Its evergreen leaves are tiny and bright green. At maturity its height x width is usually less than 12" x 24". The plant in the photo was planted about 5 years ago and is about 10" tall. It is a choice plant that is quite dense and looks great

all year long. The one downside is that after many years its roots can surface some distance from the plant. If it is planted among rocks, the roots are impossible to remove. When my first plant suddenly died after about 15 years, my next plant was planted in a large pot with the bottom cut out. The pot now acts as a root barrier. The branches tend to grow downward, like a willow. Once a year I cut the branches off before they touch the ground, preventing them from rooting.

#### CULTURAL NEEDS

*Jasminum parkeri* likes either full sun or part sun. It likes a range of soils, but they should be well drained. It does well in either dry or moist conditions.

#### ORIGINS

It is native to the western Himalayas. The plant was originally collected from Himachal Pradesh, India by Richard Parker in 1920 and named for him. He sent it to Kew Botanical Gardens, and it is now widely grown.

#### USES

It is best used as a container plant. It also works well in a rock garden. It is even used as topiary plant. It supposedly makes an interesting bonsai subject, but I have not yet seen one in any of the collections of fellow bonsai club members. I certainly recommend it for garden railways!





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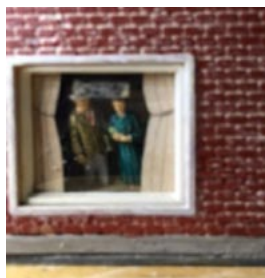




## Creating Interesting Store Fronts by Roberta Fleishman



Back in Houston in the early 80's, Morrie had a row of light plastic stores that needed to be brought to life. He allowed me to have free rein on doing just that. With my magazines and catalogues, I went to work on creating a flower shop with a three dimensional look by cutting out pictures of flowers and pasting them on various thickness of cardboard. I then pasted them onto each other and then onto the store window. This gave the effect of actual flowers in the window. For the clothing store I simply beheaded some HO figures and placed them in the window.



Now flash forward several decades to our garden railroad. Morrie started building the Piko stores that come with picture store displays, folded to look three dimensional. I didn't like how they looked so I started looking around for objects that I could use in place of these pictures. I would look at HO and O gauge items and wander the doll house sections of the hobby stores like Hobby Lobby and Michaels. I would always use coupons for the latter. I had items for a bakery, 5 & 10¢ store and more. They were put away until I could figure out how to use them in the stores. As you can see in the Hardware Store window, the display doesn't look realistic.



When the pandemic hit and Morrie was fully recovered from his surgeries, he got antsy to do something different. A member from his HO modular train club had done a demonstration on using a machine called the Cricut to make things for his layout. Morrie was intrigued with the machine so for his birthday we ordered him one and all the extra tools he thought he would need. His first goal was to make display tables for the bakery. After several cardboard mockups, he would have the dimensions down right and would create the permanent versions out of styrene. I then used colored duct tape to make a covering for the base and glued the cake and pastries to the tables.

The next building we tackled was the clothing store. We went through all the people he had for the layout. The gentleman in the jeans and the hoodie lost his head along with the hoodie. With paint, it became an argyle sweater. Cutting off his upper torso, I repainted the jeans to look like dress pants. Next we took the head off a woman in a yellow raincoat. The coat was repainted and it became a lovely blue patterned shirt-waist dress. I then took fabric and wrapped it around pieces of cardboard to look like bolts of fabric to decorate the back of the displays.



(Continued to page 28)



(Continued from page 27)

For the café, Morrie took the hat off of a seated man and the coat off his female companion. He created chairs for them to sit on along with their table. I placed a plate of cookies in front of them. Their coffee cups are made from white beads. Real cloth was used to cover the table.

Then it was time to tackle our big project, the pharmacy. My dad was a pharmacist and I wanted to pay tribute to him. The ugly light blue brick building became a red brick one as close as we could come to the real one. Weathering was done with whitening toothpaste, a method suggested by another member of the modular group. I hated the railings and we went back and forth over what to do with them. Finally we settled on alternatively cutting half the circles off. While Morrie assembled the building, I searched the internet for pictures of ads from the 30's and drugstore fronts. Amazingly I came across the perfect picture! The picture that came with the kit had the pharmacist standing in the middle of the room talking to a customer. Sorry but my dad was always behind the counter. That was exactly what this picture on the internet showed! The picture on the side



of the door that came with the kit showed an isle of goods facing a wall. So, Morrie adjusted the size of the different ads I found and we glued them to that small window. Morrie created a shelf to go in front of the picture of the counter. I painted several



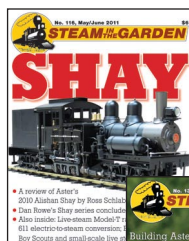
jars to mimic the containers of medicines from old drugstores. We then used a dollhouse Christmas light to mimic the bottles that hung in pharmacy windows to advertise that this was a pharmacy. Mortar and pestle images replaced the red crosses that came with the kit. Finally a miniature mortar and pestle that I had bought my dad many years ago was painted and placed by the front door. As a finishing touch, the balcony features Dr. Ivan Doctor, an actual doctor in Detroit during the 50-60's, taking a break from his patients, standing next to a potted plant. The plant was part of a floral shop we decided we didn't have room for.

Just because the box says one thing, doesn't mean you can't make the buildings something else. This building was on clearance after Christmas. We are currently turning Santa's Workshop into the M&S 5 & 10¢ Store.



5 & 10¢ Display Window





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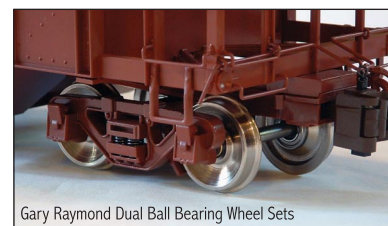
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## Kitbashing a Birdhouse

### Kitbashing a Birdhouse into a Log Cabin

By Carla Brand Breित्रner

One of the buildings Gary and I picked up from the Pilling Railroad was a log cabin that looked very realistic in the "hills" above a tunnel when the railroad was up and running. On closer inspection, it appeared to have started as a birdhouse, so I searched Michaels website for "log cabin" and there was something similar, but? It appears that Don Pilling made some simple modifications to turn a birdhouse into a log cabin home.

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Don added a side window and a porch for starters. The porch seems to have started as a length of fencing glued along the front of the cabin base. The porch extension then got plank flooring; the flooring looks to be popsicle sticks cut to size.

Next Don added porch posts and covered the roof and porch with G (or possibly O) scale shingle sheets. (Plastruct makes O-scale sheets of shingle that would fit, but need painting.) The roof peak got a simple wood strip to cover the gap in the shingles.

The final touch: "rocks" on the chimney for that rustic look.



*The Pilling cabin next to the highline from a 2010 Open House.*



*From below, the construction of the porch extension, simple porch posts and shingle sheeting is visible.*



*Aquarium river rock pebbles applied to the chimney complete the log cabin birdhouse-to-building transformation.*



*Don added a window to his cabin and piled some firewood outside.*



*From the side angle, the darker color of the porch extension is visible, if you look for it.*





Here's one of my converted bird houses.  
- Terry Manning



I made a couple of these. The first I tore off the rounded top door/bird hole and used planking to make a door. The cracks between the logs were chinked with gray silicone. Chimney is stone overlaid, as is the porch and foundation. Soda can cut to 24" x 96" 1/2 scale sheets of roofing tin. The second house was similar with a few exceptions. Window and door holes were cut and plastic inserts used. Tin roof was weathered. I broke one of the round porch post, so I replaced them both with rough cut square post. - Emil Decker



### Theme for the Month - A Home and Garden RR Tiny Home:

*Members were asked to send photos of a Michael's log cabin bird house (or similar kit) from their layout.*

This is one of my favorite Projects. Easy to adapt or modify. - Ted Yarborough

*[note the hand laid wooden shingles on Ted's house. Editor]*







**Joe, Mike and Dennis** enjoyed a morning run of 7/8ths trains!



**Tom Stevens** has been busy working on building his new layout. The track will be elevated to make operating his live steam trains easier.



A lot of rock has been dug and moved, to be used as fill in wire structures which will anchor and elevate the track. Track will be supported on iron that used to support John H's railroad.





Tom is also laying track that will extend from the islands to a hillside, where he will have a train yard and several industries. John H's metal "high bridge" will span the distance from the island to the hillside.



**Joe McCummins** built a log dump to supply logs for his *M. Green Mill & Lumber* business. The design was developed using historic log dump photos researched and provided by Dennis T. The next project is to finish the lumber mill.





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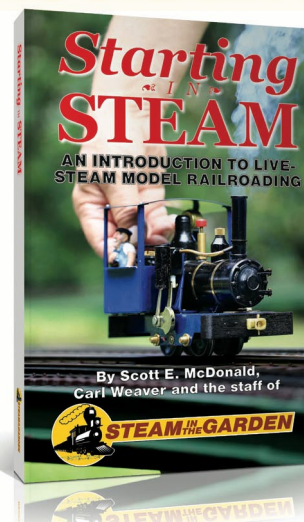
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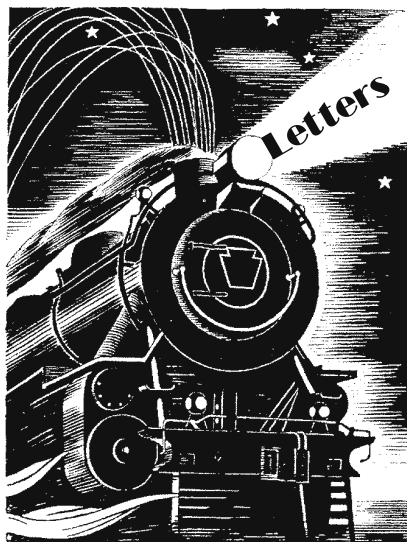
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## STRAIGHT FROM THE IRON HORSE'S MOUTH

Letters to the Editor should be sent as e-mails only to Carla Brand Breitner at:  
[simplyGReNews@gmail.com](mailto:simplyGReNews@gmail.com)

Letters will then be addressed accordingly and/or passed on to the author for further edification. Unless marked otherwise, letters to this publication are assumed to be submitted for print. Please include your name and club affiliation. Please note that we may not be able to print all letters, though we will try to respond to them. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We are unable to answer requests for information about specific products or systems; these are best addressed to the appropriate manufacturer.

### Tortoise & Lizard Bash Trestle Bridge

The acrylic trestle construction by Todd Brody had a friend of a friend looking at the pictures for details on the construction. We asked Todd to expand on his construction description and provide some additional pictures.

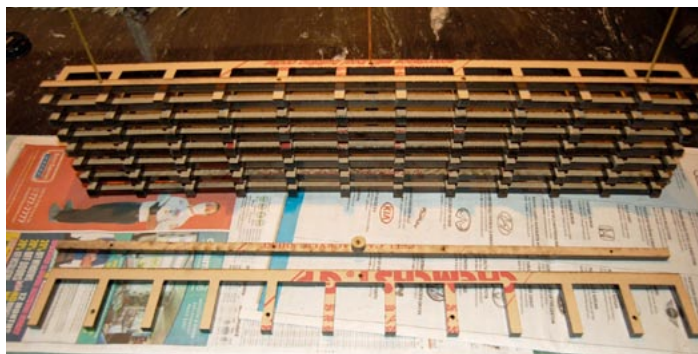
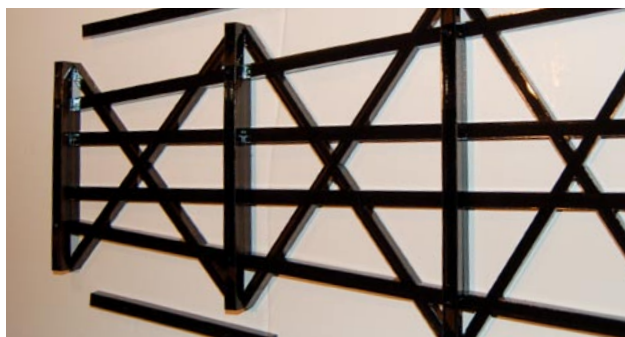
*Thank you for your interest in my acrylic bents. They held up with no visible damage or even movement on the piers during our recent wind storms.*

*The bents are made of 3/8" thick smoked acrylic cut on a 60-watt laser cutter. I designed this trestle to be assembled using stainless steel screws and nuts. The longitudinal braces are a "friction fit" with the lateral bent braces holding them in position. Each longitudinal brace spans the two bents and has a slight recess to accommodate the lateral braces and downward-facing right angle that locks in between the lateral braces.*

*Because no glue is used and there is a certain amount of free play, the bents can be adjusted on the piers to withstand crosswinds and be repositioned. In the past, the glue joints on the wooden bents would just let go or the wood would snap and I would need to re-glue these after major wind events. Maybe it wasn't such a bad idea leaving the diagonal braces off of the trestle as these were the primary wind-catchers due to their orientation relative to most winds.*

Todd Brody • Orange County Garden Railway Society

Todd also provided pictures from another acrylic construction project he recently completed.



Acrylic sheet cut for cribbing before protective paper removed



The stacked acrylic cribbing is held together with threaded rods & nuts and stabilized with fill dirt & grit.



## ADVERTISER INDEX

2021 NGRC Nashville .....	13	Eckardt Design .....	26	Rainbow Ridge .....	34
2022 NGRC Denver .....	34	Egghaulers.com .....	26	Reindeer Pass .....	22
2023 NGRC Bay Area .....	29	GardenLines.net .....	22	Roy's Used Trains .....	26
Accucraft Live Steam Station.....	15	Gary Raymond Wheels .....	29	Shawmut Car Shops .....	19
Airwire CVP Products.....	29	G Scale Graphics .....	34	Starting in Steam .....	34
American Made Steel Bridges .....	18	LGB America .....	6	Steam in the Garden .....	29
Bridgemasters .....	22	Llagas Creek .....	22	Sunset Valley Railroad .....	17
Bridgewater .....	24	Loco-Boose Hobbies .....	29	The Train Shack .....	18
CamPac Box Couplers .....	25	My Loco Sound .....	34	Train Installations .....	18
Cedarleaf Custom Railroad Decals	22	Old Dominion Railways .....	22	Trainz.com .....	18
Eaglewings Iron Craft .....	29	PIKO .....	9	Valley Train Station .....	26
		RailBoss .....	34		

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