



Garden Railroading News

July/August 2024 • 2024 #4 • www.GRNews.org



**Red Poppy
Community RR**

**Report: MO-KAN Midwest
Garden Railroad Gathering**

**Constructing a Steel Viaduct Modeled on
the Georgetown Loop Devil's Gate High Bridge**

A free digital magazine produced by garden railroaders for garden railroaders



Garden Railroading News

July/August 2024 • 2024 #4 • GRNEWS.org

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Sharing multiple ways to enjoy outdoor railroading.

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Cover Photo: A double-header freight passes the Credit Union Train on the mainlines of the Fairplex Garden Railroad.
Proprietors Fairplex Garden Railroad Volunteers/Photographer Ken Brody



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Photos by Ken Brody

Above: A Sonora Pacific locomotive steams past the town on F. John LaBarba's retaining wall railroad based on California narrow gauge railroads in the 1930s & '40s. • Santa Cruz, California

Below: This model of the Pomona Masonic Temple, built in 1909, is busy with activity on Memorial Day 2024. Container trains, including the Credit Union Train appearing on this issue's cover, travel past a switchyard on the Fairplex Garden Railroad. • Pomona, California



Photo by Carla Brand Breitner



*MAY
WE SUGGEST...
Something New*



A Sampling of Regional Meets, Train Shows & Rail Fairs in the Fall

Columbus Garden Railway Society's annual Backyard Tours welcome the public to view garden railroads around **Columbus, Ohio**, from **1 to 5 pm Sunday, September 8, 2024**. For more information, go to: thecgrs.org



Miami Valley Garden Railway Society will be hosting Fall open houses around **Dayton and Springfield, Ohio**, for the public to view their garden layouts and G-scale trains from **10 am to 5 pm Saturday, September 28, 2024**. For more information, contact club president Gene Rahrig (of mostlyscale.com) at 937-864-7411.



The **2024 California Central Coast Railroad Festival** sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum is scheduled for **October 4 to 6, 2024**, with some events starting in September and Model Railroad Layout Tours (including G-Scale) beginning on Thursday, October 3, 2024. Info at: slorm.com/ccrrf



The **National Steamup Symposium** will steam up on **October 9 to 13, 2024** in Lodi, California. Details at: www.steam-events.org



Arizona Big Trains Operators are planning their annual Christmas Garden Railroad Open Houses around **Phoenix, Arizona**, from **4 to 8 pm the weekends of December 14-15 and 21-22, 2024**. For updated information, go to: www.azbigtrains.org



Email editor@GRNews.org with your events.

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LGB Electrifies Your Rails with Swiss RhB Rhätische Bahn Trains

LGB/Märklin is offering a rail car train and a locomotive commemorating the history of the Rhätische Bahn (RhB) electrified railway in Switzerland. The Rhaetian Railway has been in operation in the Alps since 1889, serving cities such as Davos and St. Moritz. One third of the railway is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Periodically RhB celebrates an anniversary with a special paint scheme.

The Allegra 3514 paint scheme looks back a little over 80 years at mergers that helped the RhB grow. One end car is in the yellow of the former Bernina Railroad, the other end car nods to the Arosa Railroad's light blue/light gray, the middle car represents the Era III green/cream of the RhB. This powered multi-unit rail car train, called the "Ancestor Train," has been running on the RhB network in this design since December 2023.



L22227 RhB Class ABe 8/12 "Allegra"
Powered Rail Car Train

The LGB model of the Rhaetian Railroad class Ge 6/6 II electric locomotive, road number 706, is a special version with lettering for the 60th anniversary of this class which first ran in 1957. The paint scheme and lettering are prototypical for Era V. It is modelled as it looked before the conversion of the side windows. The four wheelsets are driven by two powerful motors. The articulation at the center of the locomotive is correctly modelled and the roof equipment is prototypical.



L22065 RhB Electric Locomotive
Ge 6/6 II, Era V

Both the train and the locomotive are equipped with an mfx/DCC decoder with many light and sound functions. The pantographs have digitally controllable servomotors.

More information at:
LGB.com or email customerservice@marklin.com



PIKO America Adds New Freight and a Track-Cleaning Switcher

PIKO continues to provide variety for G-Scale railroads modeling the past and the present.

Last issue we showed a Union Pacific flatcar with a pulpwood log load; extend your train with a Union Pacific tank car or "put a tiger in your tank" with an Esso tank car which uses Esso's 1959-1973 Tiger logo.



38792 Union Pacific Tank Car



38796 Esso "Tiger" Tank Car

Add character to a western railroad with a Santa Fe reefer car featuring original artwork in the style of Santa Fe posters from the 1900s for "the Chief way" and the landscape of the Southwest.



38965 Santa Fe Chieftain Steel Reefer

PIKO's track cleaning loco is as useful as it is cute. Sit back and enjoy watching a run session while the Clean Machine works on your tracks, cleaning up for track-powered locos. This little guy is powered by 6 'AAA' batteries (not included) which provide up to two hours of running time for cleaning even large layouts. The front "radiator panel" of the engine hood opens for easy access to the quick-change battery clip. Mesh cleaning pads are highly effective and long lasting, with replacement packs available.



38508 Green Clean Machine Track Cleaning Loco

More information at: www.piko-america.com

National Garden Railway Convention Notes

Sacramento GRS is hosting the 2025 National Garden Railway Convention in Sacramento, California, from June 18 to 22, 2025. Vendor hall and clinics will be at the Sacramento Convention Center. Friday night banquet will be at the California State Railroad Museum. Layouts will be open throughout the Sacramento area. Website under construction at: ngrc2025.org



In 2026, plans for a national convention may come together around the Amherst Railway Society's Northeast Large Scale Train Show (nelsts.org) generally held in West Springfield, Massachusetts, in late April. Regional meets may be planned by clubs around the country.



At the Southeast Regional Get-Together Buffet, Ken Miller made a presentation for Nashville, Tennessee, to host the 2027 National Garden Railway Convention. Eighty-eight garden railroaders from California, Maine, Florida, Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia all voted "yes" to award them the 2027 Convention. Dates and activities will be published when available.



Articles Wanted for Garden Railroading News



Email: editor@GRNews.org. Submissions are welcome. We'd love to hear from you.

Consider writing about your layout, your G-Scale modeling projects, and your train displays and steamups.



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ENTERTRAINMENT JUNCTION

EnterTRAINment Junction Announces January 2025 Closing

You might have already heard the bad news but, after two years of trying to find a person or a group to buy the business and no takers, management of EnterTRAINment Junction, the world's largest indoor model train display, [GR News featured layout July/August 2023] in West Chester, Ohio, has announced that it will discontinue operations in January 2025, with the specific date still to be determined.



"It is a sad day for us all," said EnterTRAINment Junction owner Don Oeters, who created the train-themed family attraction sixteen years ago for the public to enjoy. "This has been a labor of love for so many years and a lot of really good people have put their hearts and souls into this project to make it the best family attraction possible. To have to close it all down is a real heartache for me."



"We are announcing our closing intentions now," said Oeters, "so that the everyone has a few more months to enjoy EnterTRAINment Junction's many offerings before we close the doors. Those folks who love EnterTRAINment Junction and want to visit again, have a chance to do so. And for those who have always wanted to see EnterTRAINment Junction, but haven't... well, we wanted to give them an opportunity to visit before closing our doors as well. After we close, we will be selling all the items left in Junction Hobbies and Toys, as well as all of our displays."



EnterTRAINment Junction's most popular events— Everything Thomas through Sept. 15, the kids' no-fear Halloween celebration Jack-O-Lantern Junction in the fall, and Christmas at the Junction in December—will go on as planned and offer the public a "last-chance opportunity" to experience these popular events one more time or perhaps for the first time.

Info at: www.entertainmentjunction.com



Shapeways Declares Bankruptcy, But European Operations Resume

Shapeways, the 3D printing company that printed uploaded CAD designs in a multitude of materials, has filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and closed as of July 1, 2024, laying off all employees. The Shapeways.com website remains online, so if you are a user with print files stored there, you should download them before the website is taken down.

Shapeways started in 2007 as a spin-off of Royal Philips Electronics in the Netherlands, offering 3D printing of items in multiple plastics and metals. Venture capitalists took it public in 2021 and did not see the growth they expected. The U.S. company remains in bankruptcy court, but factory assets in Eindhoven, Netherlands, have been acquired by former Shapeways managers and 3D printing has resumed in Europe through the company, Manuevo, at Manuevo.com. The Dutch company plans to step in where Shapeways left off.

Mamod Closes Factory

Adrian Lockrey, owner of Mamod, shut down Mamod's factory in Birmingham, UK, with an open house for enthusiasts on August 3, 2024. Due to a rent increase, the need to redesign models for a different fuel source (hexamine tablets are classified as an explosives precursor as of Oct 1, 2023, in the U.K.), and no new factory space within reasonable distance for employee travel, continuing manufacture of Mamod steam trains, steam tractors, and other traction engine models has ceased. Parts and such will still be available at a new website: mamodspares.com.

A video celebrating 87 years of Mamod steam engines can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hulc8MipBqs&t=264s>

A video of the last open day, including some demonstrations of parts manufacturing, can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSwWC6vdFx0>

Albert Kramer 1944–2024



Al Kramer of Roll-EZ Wheels and San-Val Trains passed away June 24, 2024, after an accident while recovering from surgery. Al was an aviation enthusiast with a passion for model trains. Back in the 1980s he sold model trains from the back of his aviation

parts store San-Val at the Van Nuys airport. He designed Roll-EZ wheels to add a smooth ride to your model train. Every year, he held a barbecue and sale at the store to coincide with the Big Train Show at the Queen Mary in Long Beach. Folks would visit San-Val for the great food and the discounts one day and spend the rest of the weekend touring the booths and layouts at the Queen Mary. Al offered good prices and good value during the days when MSRP, manufacturer's suggested retail price, generally ruled the marketplace. Many of us started out with a Bachmann starter set purchased out of the San-Val back room.

Al supported the Fairplex Garden Railroad and numerous train clubs around Southern California. When he moved to Las Vegas, he took his enthusiasm for G-Scale trains with him, joining Las Vegas Garden Railway Society and supporting their efforts. Our condolences to his family. He will be missed.

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Trainz.com Expands Their Inventory By Acquiring HR Trains & Toys and Brasseurs Trains **TRAINZ**

H&R Trains, which operated for 47 years in Pinellas Park, Florida, was run by model train enthusiasts for model train enthusiasts. The store carried a wide range of products and shipped to customers around the globe from their instantly recognizable building featuring a mural of locomotives. When the city chose not to renew their lease in May, 2024, the Morris family decided to sell their inventory to Trainz and retire. Trainz acquired H&R Trains' store inventory and moved it all in a 53-foot truck and a 26-foot truck in a single trip.

Alice Morris and sons, Dennis and Jimmy, wrote, "To all of our treasured customers: We cannot thank you enough for all the years you have shopped with us, allowing us to open your hearts to railroading and to serve you the best possible way we could." They added, "To help you with your future train purchases, you may choose to shop online at www.trainz.com. They will do their best to serve you."

Last year, Trainz also acquired the inventory of Brasseurs Trains in Saginaw, Michigan. Brasseur Electric Trains was an iconic model train store in Saginaw founded by Robert (Bob) Brasseur in 1970. The business began with train repairs in the basement of the family's home and became a Lionel Authorized Service Station in 1974. Brasseur Electric Trains moved to a brick-and-mortar storefront after continued growth, offering train parts and a wide variety of model train products.

When K-Line went out of business in 2006, Brasseur Electric Trains acquired all of the available unassembled K-Line parts and cataloged and sold them online for years. The store also had a large inventory of Lionel parts. Trainz is making parts available online in conjunction with interactive exploded parts diagrams.

For more information, visit: trainz.com

To sell a train or a collection, visit: sellmytrains.com

Coming Soon in GR News: Report on the San Diego Western UnRegional Mini-Meet





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Red Poppy Community Garden Railroad • Located in Sun City Texas within Georgetown TX city limits

A Community Comes Together to Create a Garden Railroad with Local History

By Bob Bischoff

Sun City Texas within Georgetown TX city limits
Photos provided by Dave Rowlands and members of the Radio Control Modelers Club

Many of us assume that when we are retiring, we will be slowing down and just enjoying life. Many times retirement is different than we imagined. If anything, we are busier than ever before and enjoying all kinds of adventures.

The Red Poppy Community Garden Railroad has become a wonderful example of what can happen when a simple retirement idea takes off like a rocket. Whether you consider yourself an artisan, dreamer, designer, craftsman, tinkerer, handyman, or just have the wonder of a child, Sun City Texas has a place for you. The Radio Control Modelers Club (RCMC) and Model Railroad Group (MRG) were looking for ways to increase interest and membership. The club was chartered in September of 2011 and welcomes anyone with an interest in radio-controlled airplanes, drones, sail boats, power boats, rock crawlers, cars, rotorcraft, trains, and slot cars. There are locations throughout Sun City where members display their skills in operating their models. But there was no designated spot for trains...until now.

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The Williamson County Courthouse sits in Georgetown town square at the center of the Red Poppy Railroad.



The Red Poppy Railroad models Georgetown, Texas, from the 1940s through '60s when drive-in movies were very popular.



The view from the White Wing Golf Club cart path. Patrons of Mulligan's Restaurant watch from tables near the windows.



Bob Bischoff, Vice President of RCMC, and Bob Storbeck, the past RCMC President, presented the idea of a dedicated community layout based on garden railroads Bischoff saw on a trip to the 37th National Garden Railway Convention in Denver, Colorado, in 2022, and planning began. Finding a location for the Garden Railroad was a collaboration between RCMC and the Sun City Texas Community Association (CA) Property & Grounds Committee, the CA Staff and several CA Departments, and the CA Board of Directors. Even though no financial funding for the project had been provided by Sun City Texas, the land on which it sits is part of the CA. Consideration also had to be given to the impact the railroad location would have on existing and adjoining properties.

Finding trains available for use on the railroad was not a problem, but everything else would have to be donated, purchased, or constructed. Fund raising, donations and sponsorships would be needed to make the project happen. Signs and boxes for making donations were placed at Mulligan's and Wriggley's restaurants. The project seemed to take on the theme of "Build it and they will come." As the word got around about the railroad, local businesses saw an opportunity to be a part of the project and get some recognition. Several CA chartered clubs offered support in the design and construction of the various train, trolley, and engine sheds, and landscaping.

The site selected for the project is just outside the rear of Mulligan's Restaurant, between the building and the cart path for White Wing Golf Course. The area was flat and required a design of terrain that enhanced the trains and their movement, but did not create drainage problems or a hazard to the nearby building and cart path. Weeks of discussion, design and creative problem solving went on while the donations were coming in.

A 40'x60' raised bed was constructed with concrete footing and a 12 to 30 inch outside wall height built of

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Raised bed location outside Mulligan's Restaurant. A low fence will be added to protect layout from golf carts.



Raised bed footings.



Raised bed retaining wall and dirt bed with drainage.



Raised bed with decomposed granite fill top layer.



Lower track base stones set in place following hose layout.



decorative stone. The infrastructure has a 3 inch drainpipe system, drip irrigation lines, GFCI outlets placed in strategic locations using 110 electrical power with Romex wiring, and 40 cubic yards of crushed granite. Over 500 feet of track was installed (Aristo-Craft Flex Track and LGB Track) in the layout. In addition, 3,000 feet of 14-gauge stranded wire was used throughout the track system. For every 20 feet of track, a pigtail was installed for electrical conductivity to the track.

An electrical power grid unique to the layout was designed and hand built by retired Sun City electrical engineers. The panel pushes 10 amps of power throughout the upper track, lower track and trolley track. The panel includes fans for cooling and temperature control and other safety measures.

For the lower track base, old garden hoses were laid out to define the track design, and once secured, 12"x3.5"x3.5" limestone concrete edgers were placed next to the hoses, then buried into the crushed granite and leveled. Five-inch-wide composite edging was chopped up into four-foot-long pieces and then Gorilla Glued to the top on the limestone edgers. Donated G-Scale Aristo-Craft track was then attached to the composite.

For the top track base, 8"x4"x16" cement cinder blocks were vertically installed 2.6 feet apart from each other. Once again, the composite

was glued on top, then the track was screwed down. Crushed granite was built up around the vertical blocks to insure stability and create hills.

Designing and constructing the ground and base of the area was done during the spring and summer months. Due to the extreme heat during the summer, you would see 8 to 10 members of the RCMC and RMG working a few hours three times a week. Behind the scenes, there were 40 or more members working on parts of the project. RCMC and RMG members could be seen at all kinds of meetings and events talking about the project.

It became clear that the project needed a theme to work with. Georgetown Square in the era of 1940s through 1960s was selected. The jewel of downtown Georgetown is the historic Williamson County

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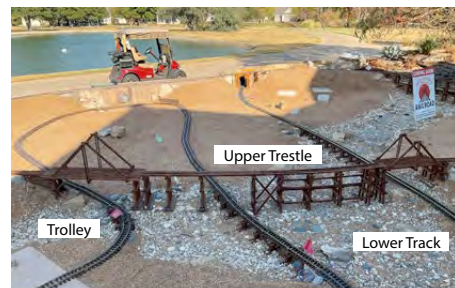
Hose to visualize upper track layout.



Upper track support blocks.



Upper track trestles being assembled.



Upper, lower, and trolley tracks.



Main control panel and back-up sub-panel.



Working on the base for the lower track.



Engine shed & building foundations, including town square.



Courthouse, and that would be prominent in the display. While the terrain and base were being constructed, the Sun City Woodworkers Club (SCWC) built a 1:32 scale replica of the courthouse based on original blueprints. The RCMC provided building details and dome using 3D printing and a brick-pattern wrap. An artist overseas refined the design for the statue on the dome. The SCWC also built engine and trolley sheds used for storing rolling stock between runs. To secure the stock within the buildings, automated radio servo technology was installed for each door.

The Stained-Glass Club provided special windows for the engine sheds and the trolley shed. The 50 foot trestle was designed and built by two members of the Radio Control Club. The Visual Arts Club painted buildings and helped with decorations. Other residents from various clubs, who are professional architects, painters, electricians, and electrical engineers, have donated their time and talents.

Drip irrigation was placed in the original construction for real miniature plants to grow around the railroad. However, with low maintenance totally in mind, it became evident that artificial plants and ground cover was the better way to go. This eliminated problems such as watering, animals, insects, pruning the plants, etc. Three ladies manage all the landscaping at the site. They utilized artificial miniature plants, ground cover and rocks in various areas around buildings and other features inside the raised bed.

As construction continued, the need to protect the railroad from weather conditions became quite clear. Texas is known for hail, high winds and rainstorms that develop quickly. The solution was to install a 40' x 60' shade fabric canopy that will withstand 130 mph wind gusts, soft ball size hail, and the Texas sun. The funding for the shade was provided by Nels Johnson, the owner of Mulligan's Restaurant.

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Courthouse construction at woodshop.



Landscaped Courthouse on site.



Engine shed post & beam frame in woodshop.



Wives preparing engine shed roof shingles.



Engine shed roof structure.



Engine shed roofing crew.



Engine shed internal view. Doors open and lock with radio controls.



Pursuing low maintenance features, we tried chopped up rubber tires in blue to make our water. This rubber is used around playgrounds and comes in several different colors. It looks like flowing rapids, and you can walk in it too. We're told it fades in about 12 to 15 years.

The garden railroad features both freight and passenger trains which travel around the area, a trolley that travels through downtown, a working outdoor movie theater, the Wolf Ranch farm, a burning building, and a replica of Georgetown square with period storefronts. LED lighting has been added to the structures for evening viewing. Holiday themed details will appear throughout the year.

A special effects team was organized to add interactive features. As you travel around the layout, you may bump into animated dioramas, including Elvis in concert, Hobo Town musicians, Batman outside the Bat Cave, a working sawmill, Perry Mason in a trial at the courthouse, and Wolf Ranch animal sounds. These exhibits can be triggered by pushing buttons located around the layout. More dioramas will be added in the future.

We wanted a variety of engine types to be available for club members to run at the site. We run locomotives using track power, lithium battery power, and live steam. An ongoing project is in place converting track power engines to the RailPro lithium battery system. However, there will always be track power available for unconverted engines. The upper track has a third rail for 32mm British 2-foot narrow gauge live steam engines.

continued on next page



*A saw mill sits near the blue rubber river.
A long trestle carries the upper track past Georgetown town square.*



Burning building.



Elvis in concert.



Hobo Town.



Wolf Ranch.



Golf course.



*Sun City Texas train station
on upper track.*





To protect the project, a wrought iron fence was installed around the perimeter. The area between the railroad and the cart path has “butter stick” stone barriers that provide outside seating for those viewing the railroad and prevent errant golf carts from getting a bit too close!

The official grand opening of the Red Poppy Community Garden Railroad was in May of 2024. The trains run weekly on scheduled dates and times, which will be adjusted for holidays and special events.

You may be asking “Will this project be ongoing?” To quote the wife of one of the RCMC members, “It’s a hobby. It will never be finished!” The project is bringing new members to the RCMC, and you never know who is going to just drop by. Georgetown Mayor Josh Shroeder and Williamson County PC3 Constable Matthew Lindeman visited in April. Families and children can often be seen having a “nose up to the window glass experience of what used to be.”



Houses, trolley station and trolley shed.



Pet hospital diorama.



Passenger train on upper trestle.

Info at: www.redpoppyrailroad.com
Red Poppy TV tab for video choices.

Multiple Sun City Radio Control Club Videos by Dave Levy on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/@suncityradiocontrolclub8239>

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20215
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44224
Märklin Start up
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48424
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81846
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Märklin Z Scale (1:220)



80634
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CLUB CORNER

Curated by Bill Derville, Past President
Rose City Garden Railway Society • Portland, Oregon

This column "Club Corner" has been my effort to help garden railroad clubs be more effective and grow their membership. I've heard that people in this hobby are discouraged because their club is shrinking, so I decided to give some thought to this subject.

Membership retention is always a huge issue to everyone who wants to grow their club. Obviously, if clubs lose more members than they gain, they shrink instead of grow. But with some thought and effort, membership shrinkage can be minimized. Over the next couple of issues, I will tackle the issue of membership retention.

Hopefully our readers will explore this issue with me. If you think of other reasons or contributing factors, drop me a line at bill@derville4.com. I would love to hear from you.

So, let's get started.

What are the main reasons that clubs lose members?

1. Lose interest in the hobby
2. Find the hobby is too expensive
3. Lose interest in the club
4. Don't like the club any more
5. The club is too geographically spread out
6. Spouse is not interested in either the hobby or the club
7. Ages out of the hobby; Too difficult to maintain or run a layout at their age
8. Other competing interests.
9. Move to a new location in another region or city
10. Death

Most of these are reasons are obvious, and a few can't be avoided. But others can be minimized with some effort. Club officers can and should lead the way, but every member that cares about their club can take the initiative and help reduce the number of people leaving their club.

Reasons 8 to 10 are things we can't do anything about. But let's take a deeper look at the other reasons. I will start with the first two, and continue with the others in the September/October issue.

1. Lose interest in the hobby. That happens. It might be related to reason 8. There are many attractive things we can do with our time. Our hobby can consume a lot of time; the bigger the layout, the more time it takes to maintain and add on to it.

But what can clubs do to make the hobby more interesting? Some newer members may want to build a layout, but they don't know where to start. Tom Gaps, a member of the Rose City Garden Railway Society, puts on two free clinics per year at his layout for people interested in the hobby. Basics such as the different scales that run on G-Scale track, an overview of track, engines and cars, roadbed and layout construction, and some gardening are discussed, as well as information about our club. It is open to both members and non-members and is advertised in our Summer Tour of layouts. Several people have joined our club after attending.

Some members, when they are getting started, hold an open house to get ideas from other members about the best track plan for the yard. You can also set up work parties of interested members to work for a day on a new railroad. People learn from working on other's layouts. [See Club Corner, July/Aug 2021 #4 Garden Railroading News.]

Another way is through education. Many clubs hold clinics where particular projects are explained. These are often in conjunction with another club meeting or event; we hold them before our movie nights and at our fall social.

Continued on next page



Photo by Linda Loudon

Mike Fisher gives a clinic on Foam Board Construction & Scenery.



Back issues of Garden Railroading News are available for free to everyone on our website: www.GRNews.org/archive.



Other clinics are full day or even multiple-day workshops where members can build a building or flat car load, body mount Kadee couplers, or convert a track-powered engine to batteries. You need a location with working room and tools for clinics where participants learn by doing. There is nothing like helping someone build something for their own layout to keep people interested in the hobby.

Many club members don't have layouts. Open houses at other member's homes allow them to enjoy the hobby without owning their own garden railroad. The open house host might even invite visitors to bring their locomotives and consist to run.

Many clubs have built modular layouts that are assembled at train shows and other local events. This is another opportunity for members to run trains they own without having their own backyard layout.



Photo by Bill Thurston

Puget Sound Garden Railway Society modules at Puyallup Great Train Show 2024.

2. The hobby is expensive, but clubs can make equipment more affordable. The biggest inhibitor to building a layout is the cost of track. Our club buys track from people exiting the hobby for about \$2 per foot and sells it for about \$2.50 per foot, depending on the condition of the track. We also buy and sell turnouts and Split-Jaw clamps inexpensively. Our club's goal is to get more layouts built. *[See Club Corner, Sept/Oct 2021 #5 Garden Railroading News.]*

We also hold club auctions where members buy and sell G-Scale related equipment. Engines are typically sold in a live auction, and everything else is in a silent auction, usually during a business meeting. *[See Club Corner, Nov/Dec 2021 #6 Garden Railroading News. All back issues are available at no charge on the GRNews.org website.]*

That covers my thoughts about the first two reasons people drop out of our clubs. Neither reason is the fault of garden railroad clubs, but clubs can do many things to keep members interested in the hobby and keep it affordable.

In the September/October 2024 issue, we will explore problems in our clubs, and what can be done to correct or prevent them so we can keep our clubs strong and growing.

I am always happy to hear your thoughts about club retention. You can email me at bill@derville4.com. ✉

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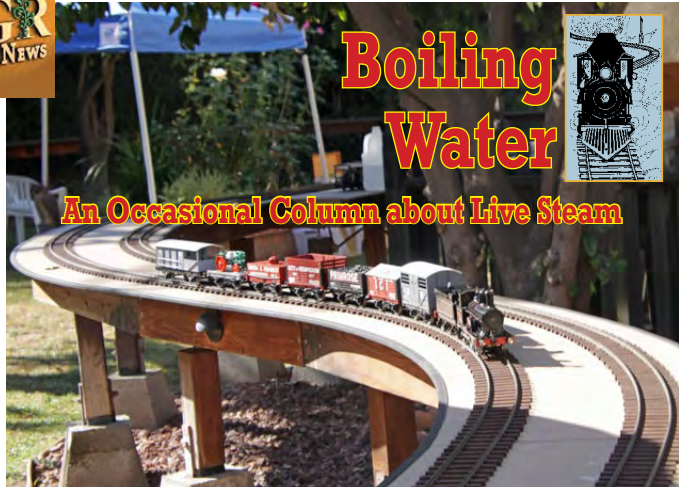
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Boiling Water

An Occasional Column about Live Steam



What Is a “Test Track?”

By Gary Woolard

Photos by Carla Brand Breitner unless otherwise noted

Like most of us, I've spent many hours drooling over pictures of complicated track plans and fully scenicked, almost photo-realistic layouts with buildings, lights, plantings and figures all to scale. Someday, hopefully, I'll build one. But for right now, I'm building something somewhat different — an 'elevated layout,' or what I've heard the Brits call a 'test track.' These are often simply a large oval of track laid directly on a chest-high table, usually open on the inside to allow operators quick access to their locos. They are most often used to run live steam trains, and for live steamers like me, that immediate access is the key.

Sure, we'd love to see our engines pull a long train past a detailed town, chuff out of sight around a mountain or into a mysterious tunnel. But if the train doesn't come back around that mountain or through that tunnel, the sparky engineer can be justly annoyed at an inconvenient derail. The live steamer's heart skips a beat, or even two! Has the loco tipped over? Has it run out of water? IS THE FIRE STILL ON? The live steamer's worst nightmare is a hot fire and a dry boiler. In our gauges and pressures nothing will explode, but many precise and critical fittings could warp, burn or deform, causing hundreds or even thousands of dollars in damage, and possibly damning your favorite loco to a future as a shelf queen!



Steam trains are prepared to run in a backyard switchyard.



Track at Los Angeles Live Steamers is accesible to club members and on view to the public monthly.

Gauge One live steam engines are almost always heavier and more expensive than their sparky brethren. They do not like grades. They balk at tight curves. They are frightened of tunnels. They hate track that is not perfectly in gauge. And most of all, live steam locos do not appreciate inattentive operators.

Running on a simple test track is a solution to many of these problems. It allows engineers to stay with their engines at just about any location. The entire track is visible, and any obstructions, kinks, or misthrown switches can be attended to before the train approaches them. And if you don't have to bend down to the ground, it's a lot easier to get up!

Even on a test track, It's not unusual for a live steam loco to slow down as it enters the friction of a curve, or even come to a complete stop, especially if it's pulling a heavy consist. Often it will just pause for a moment, gathering its breath, so to speak, until it builds up more steam pressure to continue on its way. It might even need a gentle nudge. But it might be out of fuel or water, or the fire may have quit for a variety of reasons. It's time to go take a look at it.

Where's the needle on the pressure gauge? What's the water level in the sight glass? Can you hear the fire going? On a test track all of this is simply a matter of keeping your eyes and ears open, and taking a few steps over to the engine if you haven't been following it

continued on next page



Track for steamers can be at chair height.



Multiple live steam trains can set up and run on the Paso Robles track at the National Summer Steamup.

around the oval already. (Incidentally, running live steam is an excellent way to keep your 'steps' count up.)

Ideally, a live steam layout should have a siding or two, or a spur or extension, that's at a comfortable height for operators to prepare their engines before going 'out onto the main.' Lubrication, steam oil, fuel and water are all necessary rituals before 'lighting off' your loco, and then of course you simply have to wait several minutes for your watched pot to come to a boil. No sense in tying up the mainline before your engine is ready.

It's possible to take a sort of 'hybrid' approach, especially if you can build your layout on a slope. On the



At Richard Murray's railroad, steam engines set up on a turnout before heading through a detailed layout.

slope, the track runs through a classic 'garden railroad' environment, complete with scale buildings and plantings, but at the lower end of the slope, you ignore the natural grade and put your track up higher on legs or posts, where it's easily accessible for lubrication, fueling or watering.

But if that's not possible — if all you have room for is a test track — some track on a table on legs — maybe you can take those lemons and make some lemonade. Can the legs be taken off? Can the table be disassembled as 'modules' and reassembled someplace else?

continued on next page

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Steam trains on a 'portable' track during the Lomita Railroad Museum Family Fun Day in 2023.

Congratulations — you have a portable layout. Take it to a steamup somewhere!

Sure, Gauge One live steam is a niche inside the niche hobby of garden railroading. Even so, there are more live steamers, with more locos and trains, than there are layouts to run them on. So 'steamups' are common, where several live steam hobbyists get together to run on somebody's test track, and show off the hobby to the public. Steam clubs with portable layouts are regularly invited to participate in community celebrations during holidays and 'railroad days,' and are always very popular. Admittedly, some of these layouts are only 'portable' to an optimist with a U-Haul trailer and several good friends, but it seems to be worth it. For live steamers, a test track is a sort of 'social attractor' — our version of a neighbor's back yard swimming pool or barbecue. Getting together at steamups to run our trains is how we learn and teach each other the finer points of live steaming.



Packing up track to take back home.



Geoff Clinton's set-up track extends out of a raised bed.



Track at Sacramento Live Steamers includes a scale trestle.

Photo by Stephanie Huntingdale

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The Safety of Steel Project Three Viaduct

By Patrick McConnell

In Projects One and Two of this series, I discussed the use of steel to build long-lasting, low-maintenance structures when my brother and I rebuilt our railway. I constructed a simple arch bridge and a tunnel portal, gaining some experience along the way. It was time to move on to the largest of the three projects, the curved viaduct.

We planned to include a 16-foot-long curved trestle of some kind on our railroad. This would be a focal point that would highlight the rugged terrain and expansive rock work on the railway. Fitting the theme of the previous projects, the final structure needed to be long-lasting and aesthetically pleasing.

We considered a wood trestle/bridge hybrid but the sun exposure would have compromised its lifespan. Concrete was also considered but was rejected since it did not fit the theme of the railway. Ultimately, we again settled on steel. As for design, we wanted a structure that was representative of a design from the 1880s. Iron viaducts were starting to be implemented during that time, as engineering advances allowed railways to traverse more challenging terrain. One of the most well-known examples is the Devil's Gate High Bridge on the Georgetown Loop, built in 1884 (Photo 1).

With a design in mind, I started by laying out the curve on a temporary wood bench with old track (Photo 2). I had a steel stake at the center of the curve that had been used to lay out the concrete roadbed and foundation for the bridge, so I tied a string around the stake and stretched out the string, using its end to measure where the track should lay. A turnout was positioned in the middle of the curve, at one end of the viaduct. With the curve laid out, steel plates were bolted to the concrete abutments at both ends using Wej-It concrete anchors (Photo 3). To use these anchors, a masonry drill bit is used to create a hole in the concrete, then the Wej-It, a bolt with an expanding collar on one end, is hammered into the hole and wedges itself in place.

Once the end plates were attached, I welded the first rail ($\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{16}$ inch square tubing) of the viaduct deck (the one on the inside of the curve) to one end plate. I carefully bent the tubing around to the other end plate and clamped it. Then small adjustments were made using the string stretched from the stake to ensure it followed the correct curvature. Once satisfied, I cut the tubing to length and welded the other end.

Continued on next page



Photo 1 *Devil's Gate High Bridge on the Georgetown Loop. History Colorado 20100872, William Henry Jackson collection.*

Photos by William Henry Jackson



Photo 2 *Laying out the curve on a temporary bench.*



Photo 3 *End plate attached with Wej-its supports a rail for the viaduct.*



Photo 4 *Welding in the viaduct crossmembers.*

Building the A-frame Support Towers

I welded the second rail of the deck on one end, pulled it into a curve, and clamped the other end. I temporarily inserted crossmembers between the rails to get the correct spacing and even out the curve. The second rail was cut to length and welded on. I then inserted 17 crossmembers between the rails, spaced 8 inches apart from each other, and welded them in place (Photo 4 previous page). The crossmembers on one end of the viaduct get progressively wider to accommodate the turnout. To finish the deck, I welded a piece of 1/16 x 1 inch flat stock under the inside of each rail (Photo 5).



Photo 6 Twelve identical A-frames.



Photo 7 Connecting A-frames together to create towers.

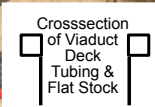


Photo 5 Attaching flat stock under the main rails to complete the bridge deck.



Photo 8 Top crossmember being attached with bolts.

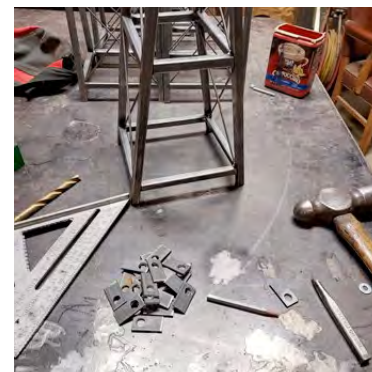


Photo 9 The tower feet before being attached.

Next came the towers. I drew up a basic design that would be simple to build but capture the character of the Devil's Gate High Bridge. I decided on six towers and went to work on mass production. Fortunately, the viaduct is the same height for the full span, so all the towers were identical.

I constructed 12 A-frames, then welded crossmembers between pairs (Photos 6 & 7). Each A-frame received an extra crossmember bolted on top (Photo 8). This would be welded to the deck, so the towers could be separated from the deck. One eighth inch steel rod was used to create cross bracing on the front and back of each tower in an X formation, purely for visual appeal. The last step was to add feet to the towers by welding on a one sixteenth inch thick tab with a hole on one end (Photo 9).

Continued on next page

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Photo 10 *Viaduct top rail before welding on flat stock. A-frame tower supports will be placed between the rail to complete viaduct.*

I repeated this tedious process six times until all 24 tower feet were anchored, and each tower was levelled.

I was concerned about expansion and contraction with the seasons, but the viaduct has been in place for a year and a half now, sitting through temperatures from 20F to 100F with no perceivable issues. The structure is extremely robust and able to easily support my weight walking its length. More importantly, it withstands three large, active dogs jumping over, under, and into it.

Overall, I am very pleased with how all three of these projects turned out, and if I've done my job well, they should be around for as long as the railway. ✂



Photo 11 *Lining up the A-frame tower to the deck to weld crossmember to rail.*

Installing the towers was no simple task. Each tower was spaced apart under the deck. Then the extra crossmember at the top of each A-frame was wedged in between the pieces of flatstock on the bridge deck and welded in place (Photo 11). The feet of the towers floated an inch above the concrete foundation.

Using the hole in the feet of the towers as a guide, I used a masonry bit to drill into the concrete foundation. Once all four holes were drilled for a tower, I unbolted the tower from



Photo 12 a & b *Leveling the rail using Wej-it bolts, nuts and washers at the tower base after reattaching tower to crossmembers.*

the deck and removed it. I then hammered a Wej-It into each hole.

Each Wej-It received a nut, then a washer, before the tower was replaced, hopefully with the Wej-Its lining up in the holes of the feet. With the tower back in place, another washer and nut went on each Wej-It, effectively sandwiching each tower foot between two nuts. With a small level on the viaduct deck, I could adjust the nuts up or down on each foot to bring each tower to level (Photo 12 a & b).





THE MO-KAN MIDWEST GARDEN RAILROAD GATHERING

A Report by Mick Spilsbury

The three-day gathering in Kansas City hosted by the MO-KAN Garden Railroaders was a great success. Close to 100 participants gathered from fourteen states: Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maryland, North Carolina, Colorado, Arizona and California. (One from the last — me!)

Fifteen railroads were open during the three days and were the highlight of the meet. They presented a potpourri of styles and scope, as the following images of twelve of the railroads illustrate. I have been featuring images and videos of the railroads on GR News' social media channels. There were also clinics, model and photo contests, and a closing dinner.

Other highlights for me were meeting garden railroaders from so many states and the warm welcome from the MO-KAN garden railroaders. There was a wonderful spirit at the gathering, a sense of community among participants from many areas of the USA. I also believe that everyone learned something new about our hobby. I certainly did.

Many members of the MO-KAN Garden Railroaders club contributed to the success of the gathering under the leadership of David Peerbolte (who also has a lovely garden railroad). I was struck by the teamwork and camaraderie of the group.

I also learned that a regional gathering can have many of the features of a National Convention with a much lower expense outlay. The gathering's website was integrated into the club's website and was simple to use. A ten page handout provided all we needed to know about the fifteen open railroads, the schedule, and Kansas City restaurants.

The MO-KAN Garden Railroaders were following a path initiated by Iowa garden railroaders last year. Congratulations to Iowa for getting the ball rolling and to the MO-KAN Garden Railroaders for another successful Midwest Gathering.

THE RAILROADS



Dave & Toni Peerbolte's Dutch Valley Railway

A lovely railroad with a stunning assortment of ground covers and scale trees, and a number of delightful trackside dioramas. A railroad easy to enjoy from a nearby seating area on a summer afternoon with a glass of wine!

Continued on next page

RAILROADS OF THE MO-KAN MIDWEST GARDEN RAILROAD GATHERING



Buck & Janet Neulinger's Craft River & Critter Creek RR

This mature railroad is elevated and winds its way over, around and between thriving lush plantings and over an impressive creek, all of which frames operating consists beautifully.

Gary Snyder & Linda Ilgenfritz's G & L RR

This is an operating railroad that *"will always be under construction"*! And there is plenty of space to add to the 600+ feet of track in place, which already accommodates long consists traveling across trestles and past townships.



Bob & Frances' B & F RR

A very busy railroad. Five trains hustle along the tracks, passing an astonishing number of colorful plants and landscape details and a large water feature. It's a lot to take in and a great railroad for video-taking.

Continued on next page



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RAILROADS OF THE MO-KAN MIDWEST GARDEN RAILROAD GATHERING continued



Mike & Kelly Charlson's Gardner Division

An elevated track designed for live steam operation also enables great views of the many scratch-built, innovative and unique items of rolling stock and the battery-powered diesels hauling them.



Jim & Bobbi Goodin's Grizzly Flats RR Kansas Division

A tidy and pretty homage to Disney. Plants have been carefully selected and maintained beautifully. As you would expect for a Disney enterprise, the railroad is in pristine shape!

Wayne & Karen Lang's K & W RR

This 20-year-old railroad is aging gracefully. Stone buildings and numerous, unique trackside details make a delightful pastoral scene. Long trestles take elevation out of the sloping site and provide great viewing spots.



Continued on next page

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RAILROADS OF THE MO-KAN MIDWEST GARDEN RAILROAD GATHERING continued



Mike & Joyce Martin's Rocky Ridge RR

Numerous trees with dark green foliage, contrasting bright green ground cover, and an attractive pond make a lovely setting for this shaded railroad. Trains appear, then disappear, a lot—always a great feature on a garden railway.

John & Sandy Dula's Shagbark Valley RR

Woodland was cleared recently for this large new railroad. Locomotives run around two large loops, but much work lies ahead.

The lady of the railroad put a tornado together the night before its opening to explain some broken buildings! Love it!



Bill & Mary Irons' IRONS Horse RR

A three-foot cascading waterfall is the centerpiece of this relatively new railroad. A large raised oval of track circles the waterfall while a side track heads to the grandchildren's tree house.

Continued on next page

Valley Train Station

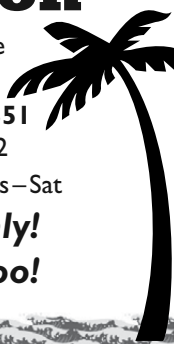
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RAILROADS OF THE MO-KAN MIDWEST GARDEN RAILROAD GATHERING continued



Peter & Julie Lewitzke's Never-Too-Late Narrow Gauge RR

Years of procrastination melted away when retirement heralded the onset of construction, which continues while this front yard railroad operates with a great back story.



Rick & Susan Manfredi's Peculiar Junction RR

Trains run around and over a massive water feature on this established line. An aerial view from a deck high above the line adds to the fun. A loco collection in the railroad shed is impressive.



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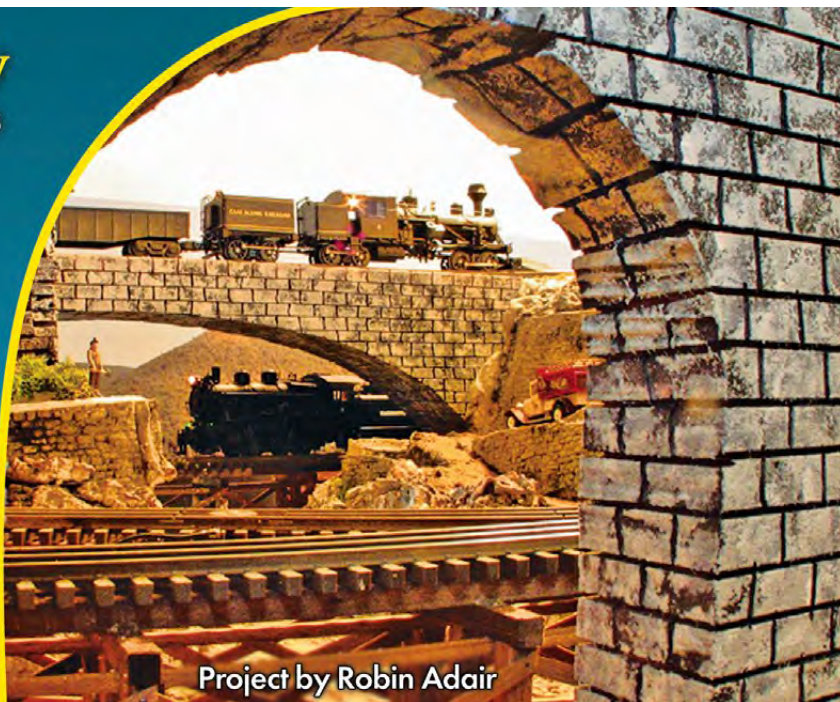


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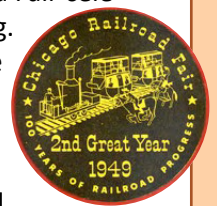
Various LGB Versions



Your editor fell into a rabbit hole when I looked into the history of the Denver & Rio Grande Western "bumblebee" livery to write about PIKO's new #223 2-6-0 Mogul model.

I had a picture I had taken of #268, a 2-8-0 Consolidation in "bumblebee" colors, on display in a park in Gunnison, Colorado. It had been retired to the Gunnison Pioneer Museum. #268 was built by Baldwin in 1882 and served on the railroad until 1954. It appeared in the Rio Grande 75th Anniversary Tour illustrating D&RGW history in 1945.

#268 was chosen to represent D&RGW in 1949 in the second year of the Chicago Railroad Fair celebrating 100 years of Chicago railroading. Thirty-nine railroads participated in the Chicago Railroad Fair, building displays and bringing in railroad equipment to 50 acres of Burnham Park along the shore of Lake Michigan. Fairgoers could ride the "Deadwood Central," a narrow gauge railroad from the main entrance to the Western town exhibit, Gold Gulch. #268 pulled a second train on this line. D&RGW decided to paint #268 in the yellow and silver "Aspen Glow" livery they had started using on their diesel locomotives at the time and referred to the fictional "CC&TC RR" (Cripple Creek & Tin Cup Railroad) on the tender.



The engine returned to service on what is now "Durango & Silverton" trackage, still sporting its "bumblebee" paint job. In 1951, the Technicolor™-ready colors appealed to Paramount Pictures, who featured the engine in the movie "Denver & Rio Grande." Two C-18s were crashed as part of the filming, also painted in yellow.



The colorful "bumblebee" paint scheme attracted model train makers as it looks great running in a garden. Most G-Scale manufacturers have made a non-historical locomotive in "bumblebee" livery. Pantone® even has a color match, Pantone® 13-0850 Aspen Gold.

Submit your scratch built, modified, weathered or detailed—unique in some way—loco.
Send your photos and write-up to Editor@GRNews.org or Marketing@GRNews.org.



Plant of the Month

— By Richard Murray

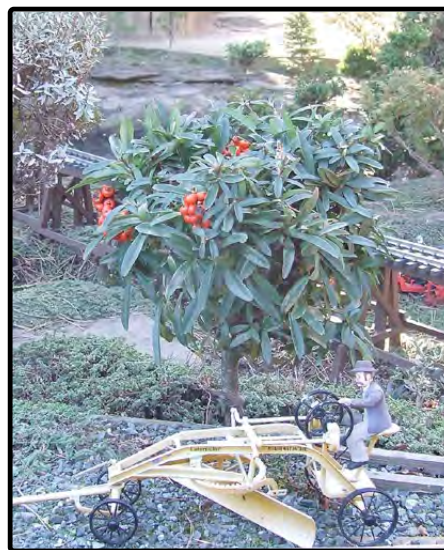
Botanical Name: *Pyracantha* 'Navajo'

COMMON NAME: Firethorn

USDA HARDINESS ZONE: down to 6 (0 to -10° F)

SUNSET ZONE: 4–23

Pyracantha is native to Southwest Europe east to Southeast Asia. It is a medium-sized evergreen shrub growing up to 8 feet tall. It has many thorns. The specimen shown here in 2018 is about 8 years old. I pinch it frequently in order to keep it small. Although the plant normally would have a dense profusion of orange-red berries in late fall (when this photo was taken), frequent pinching reduces the normal production of small white flowers in late spring. Fewer flowers in the spring means fewer berries in the fall. The berries persist into winter until they are often



eaten by birds. The frequent pinching also seems to have eliminated the thorns.

The brightly colored berries contrast nicely against the glossy dark green leaves. It does best in full sun but some shade is okay. It takes many types of soil as long as there is good drainage. Best of all, it is easy to grow and highly resistant to disease. It can also be trained as an espalier or bonsai specimen. *Pyracantha* is related to *Cotoneaster* [see *Garden Railroading News Jan/Feb 2022 #1*]. Both have red berries, but *Cotoneaster* does not have any thorns.

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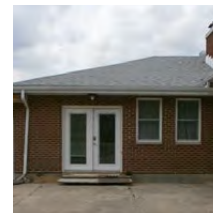
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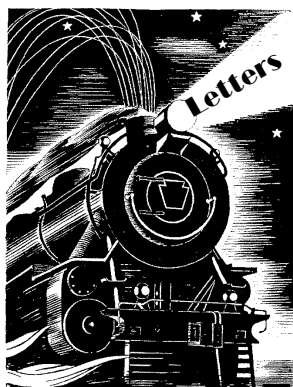
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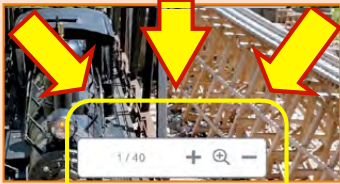
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