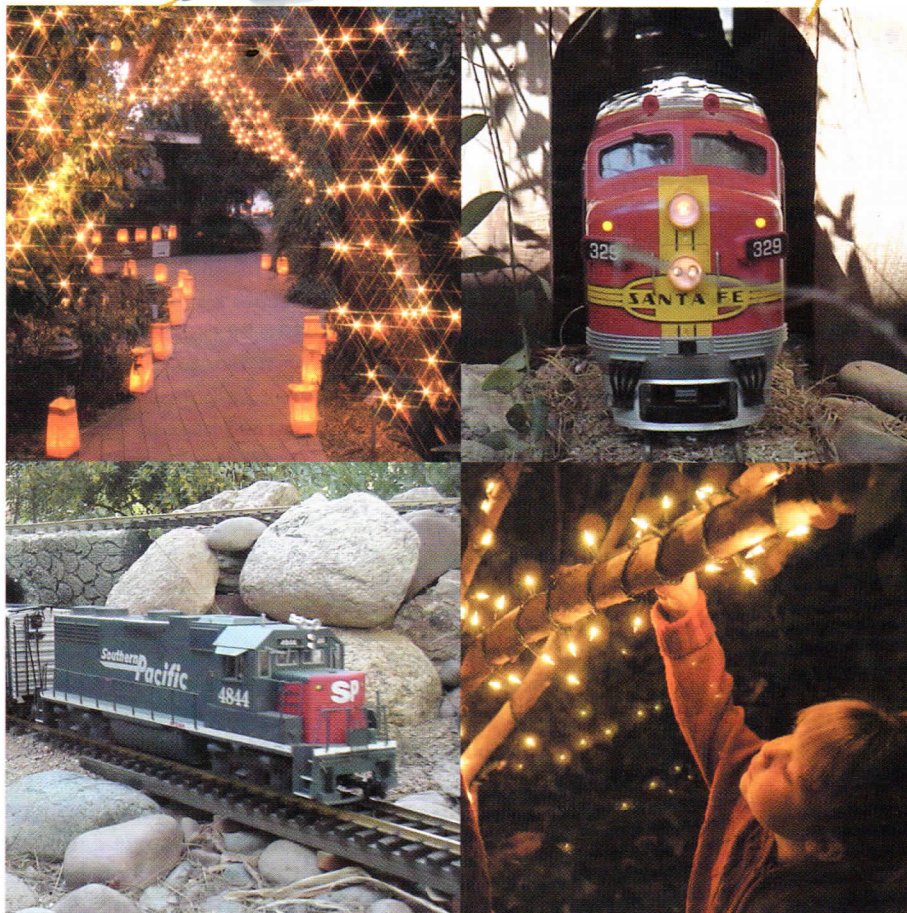


# Tucson Botanical Gardens



A Newsletter for Members of the Tucson Botanical Gardens ■ Winter 2003–2004

## All Aboard for a Garden Holiday



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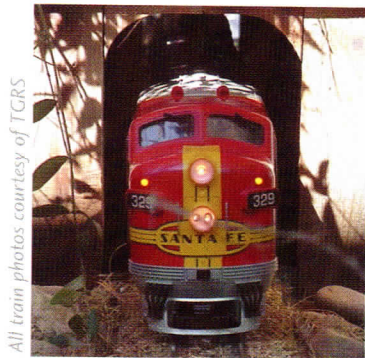
# All Aboard!

## Garden Railways Have a Long History

Model railroads are as old as full size trains and garden railroading started soon after railroads began crossing the country. Many railroad pioneers had scale versions of real equipment made to illustrate their ideas. These models grew over the years into trains that could be ridden upon or that served as a source of entertainment. In the 1890s, the Märklin Toy Company introduced a line of special-order tin plate toy trains in several scales with locomotives driven by clockwork, electric motors, or live steam. By the 1960s the larger scales had faded in popularity with the general public and were owned mainly by collectors and live steam enthusiasts.

The "Holidays on Rails" exhibit is scheduled to open on November 20<sup>th</sup> and will be on display, weather permitting, through the winter. For more information on the exhibit, call the Gardens at 520/326-9686, ext. 10.

Another German toy company, LGB, began to produce gauge I or garden scale (G-scale) trains in the late 1960s. Conditions were right and garden railroading took off as the fastest growing segment of the model railroad hobby. Today, garden railroading has become a family hobby enjoyed by people of all ages and genders. It can be as inexpensive or expensive and elaborate as you want with sets running anywhere from \$100 up to museum quality models costing as much as \$12,000–\$15,000.



All train photos courtesy of TGRS

Garden railroading combines a fascination with trains and the joy of gardening and can be any size from a small patio garden to many acres of gardens and trains. Some garden railroaders simply run track through an existing garden so they can watch the trains run and the plants grow. Others build fantasy layouts where dragons roam; or include such specialties such as the London to Hogwarts Express. These garden railroads attempt to mimic in a small scale the full size features of the world around us using dwarf Alberta spruce

as pine trees, bonzai'd azaleas as chestnuts or oaks, and dichondra, thymes, and mints as ground covers and small shrubs. Plants with small leaves are desirable because they won't grow to a size that will overwhelm the track and buildings. Other garden features are also used to create small representations of the real world such as water features, including streams, ponds, and waterfalls; or forests, plains, and mountains. Sometimes tons of rock and earth are moved into the garden to create hills and valleys to give the impression of tracks wandering through rocky mountain passes.

Once the garden framework is in place, towns, industries, and people can be added to create an infinite variety of scenes. Buildings can be purchased in pre-built or kit form or constructed from plans or photos. The scenes can be populated with figures purchased or carved from polymer clays. The possibilities are endless.

The Tucson Garden Railway Society (TGRS) was started in 1994 by a group of families interested in garden railroading. As a nonprofit educational corporation, the purpose of the Society is to help members learn about and enjoy all facets of garden railroading. They conduct meetings, clinics, workshops, and displays for members and the general public at home shows, schools, churches, county fairs, and other public venues such as the Gardens. Some TGRS members have impressive home garden railroads that rival some of the finest layouts across the country. The TGRS is a completely volunteer organization and welcomes families and individuals to become members.

The TGRS will be setting up a holiday display at the Gardens again this year. We all hope you enjoy the trains!

