SCENERY MADE EASY!

By Robbo

Number 3 in a Series

"DRESSING" THE LOCK!

This Scenery article is to show some of the methods that were used to finalise the "Lock Project". As mentioned previously, I prefer to make my buildings as realistic looking as possible for use on my train layout.

This article could be misconstrued as being a showcase for commercial products — if that appears to be the case, I apologise, for it is not meant to be. I will always try to use my home-made materials rather than the commercial ones, simply because of the expense involved. However, I felt it also needed reference to what is available commercially, because sometimes there is no suitable substitute!

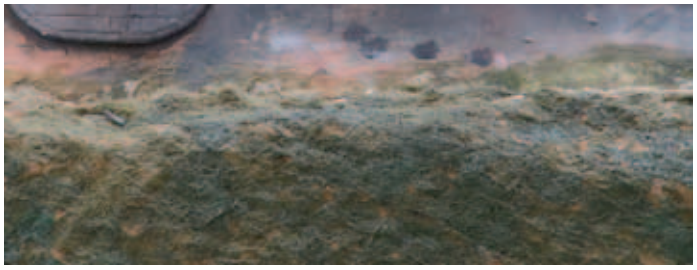
I treat each project as a varying sized "diorama", some projects require only a small amount of scenery because they will fit in to an area on the layout and become part of a larger scene, but it is important to keep a "similarity" to where it eventually will be placed, similar to "continuity" in movie making!

When I first started this project I failed to make both sides wide enough for what was intended — so the first step was to increase the width to allow for the "forest" area.

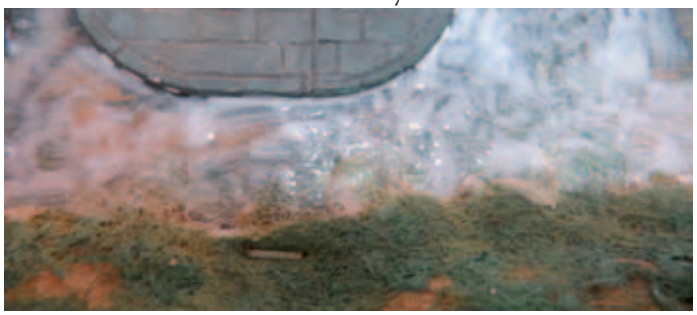
I built this up using scrap styrofoam packing so that I could "plant" my trees. Over this was placed old carpet felt underlay. When using this I halve the thickness, simply by pulling the felt apart. To strengthen the underlay there is a hessian mesh in the middle making it very easy to divide.

I stapled the underlay to the wooden frame, then teasing it apart more, I used a number of different pieces, blending them in together to form the base for my forest area. It is important when doing scenery to remember that nature is never "even" so I had dips and rises in my underlay.

Using a large brush about 1/2 inch in width, I painted the underfelt with a suitable green acrylic paint. This doesn't have to be perfect and areas of "raw" underlay can be left for effect.



Whilst the paint was drying on the underlay I started laying down the base areas surrounding the Linka pavement castings — first, I "flood" the area with a PVA white glue, again similar to what I use when ballasting track — this is a mixture of a small amount of water, enough to "liquify" the glue and a small amount of dish washing liquid to make the mix "wet" and easy to flow!



This is spread on the areas using an eye dropper — I use a 3ml Plastic Disposable Graduated Transfer Pipette. I do a reasonable size area, enough to be easily handled before the glue starts to "go off"!

Then I use a small disposable medicine cup and "drizzle" the grit onto the glue areas. It doesn't take long until all areas are covered, then I brush away any loose grit off the pavement areas.

The fine grit is similar to what I use when ballasting my OO9 gauge track base.

This “grit” is actually a type of builder’s sand that is used here in OZ! I have passed it through a sieve to get rid of the unwanted materials and larger pieces of grit. You could use any suitable material of your choice, but it must be of a reasonably “fine” nature. Even well dried earth could be used!

Turning now to the grass — I use the fine grade of “ground-up foam” that we looked at earlier. First I give an area a good spray of cheap hairspray, then I drizzle the foam onto the painted underfelt, repeating the process until all areas are covered.

After doing this with the foam, I then gave it another good spray of hairspray and sprinkled a coloured “flock” over the grassy areas. I like to do this to give it a feeling of being blades of grass.

If you wished you could also use “static grass” and a “static grass applicator” to make it appear even more realistic with the blades of grass actually “standing up”.

There are many YouTube movies showing how this is achieved, but simply speaking a “sticky area” has the static grass sprinkled over it through a fine sieve whilst an electrical charge is applied. Its like the hairs on your arm standing up if you come into contact with static electricity.

These Static Grass Applicators can be very expensive if you bought a commercial item, but again on YouTube there are a number of videos on making your own from an electric “Bug Killer”. It’s very simple really, but also cheap ones can be purchased on ebay from people who have made them at home for sale — have a look on YouTube and make your own.

You can by now follow the process on how the scenery is created, being built up as a series of layers — building from the “ground up” so to speak.

The object is to make the viewer look at “mini scenes” within the larger, overall scene. Creating interest can be achieved by introducing trees; shrubs; bushes; flowers; “dead fall”; figures; animals and other everyday items.

I showed in a previous article how to create a tree. This was a “generic” style of tree with no intention to try and make it a specific variety, however the same principles are applied for specific trees. We will look at some of these “specific trees” in the next few articles.

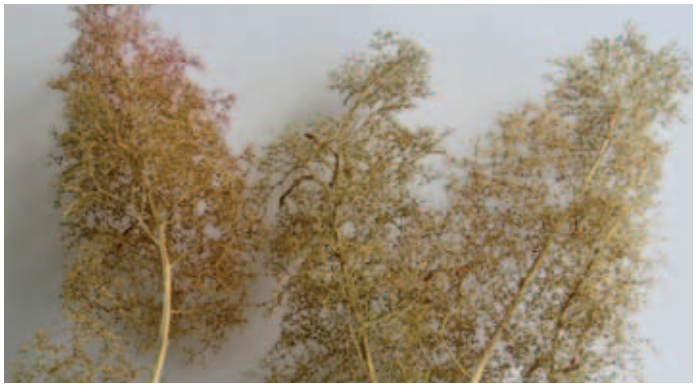
The trees are “planted” in suitable positions, following the rules as applied when creating a Bonsai Planting — NEVER have an even number, ALWAYS go for an odd number of trees. Bonsai was a previous hobby of mine — but that is another story!

Choose a tree that you want to make the focal point, in my case it was the “dead tree”. This hasn’t been placed in the middle of the scene, but off to one side — even so, the eye is drawn towards it!

Other trees of different styles and colours are then positioned around it, some close, others further apart. Underbrush of different types (and colours) are then planted, building upon ones previously placed.

I have used a whole lot of different commercial products here so that the effects can be seen by the reader, however, I could quite easily have used my home-made ground-up foam of differing grades to achieve the same effect.

For instance, some of the larger shrubs have been produced using “sea foam”, a very fragile dried plant, easily obtained from Europe but very expensive to purchase. Woodland Scenics has been

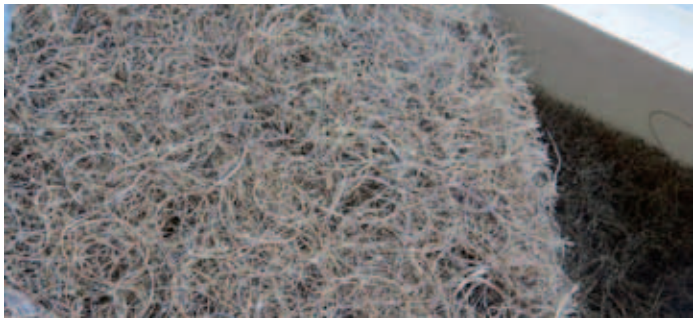


used extensively, some of which are illustrated here. They are especially useful for underbrush and small to large bushes.

To give variations in colour and very importantly, for "texture", I use different shades of NOCH Leaves, again available from ebay! These are sprinkled over tree foliage, shrubs, etc that have been sprayed with hairspray or a Spray Adhesive, and give a very pleasing finish.

One thing that I always like to introduce into my scenery projects are hedges or bramble bushes. For these I use "rubberised horsehair", once used in upholstery for filling *(see illustration top of next column)*. I came across this on an Australian online site — Modeller's Warehouse — *http://www.modellers-warehouse.com.au/*.

I guess it could also be found in other locales, such as the UK or Europe. Before I position it on the layout, I add the "foliage". First give it a liberal



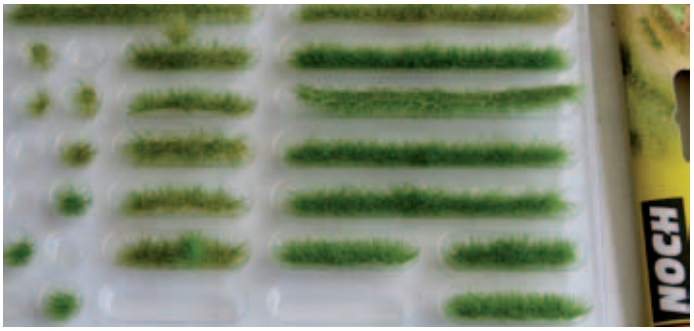
spray with cheap hairspray, then drizzle by hand the NOCH leaves. I then give it another spray and use a different shade of green NOCH leaves — and finally give it all another spray over.

A lot of spray you might say, but I find if it doesn't get a good dose of spray adhesives things start to come adrift once dried. You could also give a final spray over with a mixture of water and PVA white glue (with a dribble of washing up liquid) sprayed from a water spray bottle or atomiser!

This applies to ANY of the foliage for trees; shrubs; bushes and grasses. One thing with any spray adhesive — and hairspray — it is not good doing it in enclosed areas, try to always do it in a ventilated area. I have had some "doozy" headaches from some of these sprays, also when I am airbrushing.

Once happy with my bramble bush or hedge I then give the base a good dollop of PVA and "plant" it in position. You could also sprinkle over with coloured sand, or Woodland Scenics "Flowers" to make it into a flowering bush, hedge etc.

For the little added "finery" such as flowers and grass tufts I have used products by MiniNatur purchased from Modeller's Warehouse in Australia and NOCH. The grass tufts *(see illustration top of next page)* are placed in areas that you would normally expect them to appear, such as at the base of trees, poles, buildings, etc. Others can be randomly placed for effect. It is my intention in further articles to show you how you can create your own grass tufts, reeds, bullrushes, etc!



The water — *ahhh, the water!* Well, it's REAL isn't it? So how did we go about it, unfortunately I did rely heavily on expensive commercial products from Woodland Scenics — but it doesn't necessarily have to be! Let me explain.

The base was a strip of perspex off-cut, the UNDERSIDE was painted in a muddy green colour and inserted "shiny side up" and fastened in position with a good strong glue.

The areas of rough water were created using Woodland Scenics "Water Effects" which is of the same appearance as white PVA glue, but it has a much thicker consistency. It is possible to substitute this with ordinary plumber's silicone sealant, either clear or white. It may be necessary to thin this a little with ordinary mineral turps, or follow the "clean up" directions on the tube.

If using WHITE then there will be no need to paint it later, but if you also want CLEAR areas appearing then it is best to use the clear version.

Using a stiff short haired brush the medium is DABBED onto the surface of the perspex where the waves or rough water will appear. This can be built up gradually into sizeable waves over a period, each application MUST be left to dry before the next layer is applied. When dried it becomes clear, except if you are building up layers, then it will be quite opaque!

Once the rough water is finished you can then "dry brush" white acrylic paint onto the tips of the waves, but try not to overdo it. To seal this and give it "depth" I then used another Woodland Scenics product called "Realistic Water", this **IS** expensive stuff and does not go a very long way.

If you want to give real depth, it can be applied only to a depth of 1/8 inch at a time, it has to dry completely before adding the next layer. Drying time can be quite lengthy depending on weather and humidity.

The downside to this medium is it will find ALL HOLES and CREVICES and leak onto the floor or carpet — be warned! You must make sure the area to be processed is completely sealed before pouring , and then it is self-levelling, creeping into every nook and cranny!

The up-side is the final appearance is so realistic that you have the urge to dip your finger into it to see if it is real!

Alternatively, you could also use multiple coats of varnish, but some of these do have a "yellowing" effect on the areas coated after a period of time.

Next in the series we shall be looking at creating a variety of trees — Birch, Fir, Oak, etc.

Happy modelling Linkaites

Robbo