

Building Oak and Maple Trees

By Bruce Oberleitner

Building scenery is a big step for many people in our hobby. Most people start by adding some simple tree's and grass to their layouts. However, once you add that first tree, it cries out to you to add about a hundred more of them to the layout! That can be an expensive proposition!

Making the Tree Trunks

The Tree trunks are made by cutting a 7" section of the 18 gauge floral stem wire to serve as a base. Then wrap some masking tape around the base of the tree until you get the trunk thickness to were you want it for your tree.

Then cut about seven 5" pieces of 26 gauge floral wire to use as tree branches. Wrap the first one around the tree trunk in a clockwise fashion. Tie the second branch in place going counterclockwise. Repeat this procedure alternating from clockwise to counterclockwise until you have used up all of you branch material.

The trunk is then treated with a latex caulking compound. Make sure you get the Latex type as the next step may not work with other types of caulking compound. Once the caulk dries, you then paint it with any of the acrylic paints or use the Walnut colored spray paint as I did. Note that you could also use the gray primer paint if you prefer tree trunks with a gray tone to them.

Flocking the Tree Using Poly Fiber

Instead of using Woodland Scenics foliage netting for this project, I made my own using Poly Fiber material called Poly-Fil that I found at Jo-Ann's craft store. This material is used to stuff animals, pillows and other like objects and is sold in large bags and it's inexpensive. One to two bags should last a lifetime unless you have a big railroad to fill with trees!



Figure 1: The Boys are getting into trouble again! Good thing they have that big tree behind them to hide their extra circular activities!

Bill of Materials

Wal-Mart

- #20010 Colorplace Equip. Gray primer
- #20006 Colorplace Walnut/Nogal spray paint
- Rustoleam Spruce Green spray paint
- 18 Gauge Floral Wire
- 26 Gauge Floral Wire
- Floral Wire Cutter

Apple Barrel Paints

- #20575 Sandstone
- #20576 Toffee
- # Burnt Sienna
- Black

Woodland Scenics

- T-50 Blended Earth
- T-49 Green Blend for trees and bushes

Jo-Ann's Fabric

- Poly-Fil poly fiber

Misc

- Aqua Net Extra Strength unscented Hairspray
- 5/64" Drill Bit for tree planting



Take the Poly-Fil out of the bag and spray paint it with the green spray paint. I used Rustoleam Spruce Green since that's what I had on hand at the time. You could probably use other colors like red's and yellow's if your modeling the fall.

Note, I tried using RIT brand dyes for this step. Simply put, this does not work! Another possibility that might work would be to dunk the poly fiber material into green colored latex paint. Squeeze off the excess paint and let dry. This might be cheaper in the long run if you making many trees!

Flocking the Tree using coarse ground foam

My friend Bob Parrish uses a slightly different flocking technique when he makes his famous sagebrush trees. The process starts by spraying the tree trunk with 3M 77 spray adhesive and using a coarse grade foam material to bulk up the tree. When the tree shape looks good, spray it again with the adhesive and coat with finer green colored light foam. The main advantage of this method is that the tree doesn't have that Puffball look to it that you sometimes get with poly fiber materials.

Summary

You can make a group of these trees in a couple of evenings. I usually make many tree trunks and caulk them one evening, spray paint them the next and then add the flocking a third night.



Figure 2 - Left: Trees can add a great deal of interest to even the smallest scenes on your railroad.

Figure 3 - Above: While this might look like a Woodland Scenics tree, it's a custom tree made by the author.

Figure 4 - Below: Ernie's Fruit stand is sure a lot cooler to work at since Ernie moved the stand under that big tree

