# I'm in the garden...

It's coming along nicely: the terrain skin gives our beginners' layout its contours, while cliffs and tunnel portals are already in place. Now spring is here: our layout is going green and is being planted.

But before the green of the hills and vales breathes life into the layout, all the ballast and gravel and road surfaces must be completed. And there are gravel surfaces all over the place: a car park outside the supermarket, along the tracks, by the station, on the building site – the list is never-ending. But all these surfaces look different, so we keep stocks of ballast in lots of different colors. These we mix as required until the color exactly matches the particular situation. Much earlier, such design activities were hardly noticed, but on a finished layout, it is amazing what a positive effect these surfaces have on the overall impression. And this is how it works: first, sand is scattered on the already-colored section. Don't scatter too much; it's better to add more later. Then the sand is spread with a broad, soft brush. The gravel can also be modeled on flat surfaces with a round brush – sometimes, it's enough to tap the baseboard gently. Different colors and grain sizes for these areas have a realistic appearance and lighten up the overall picture.

Once the ballast and gravel is distributed and the overall picture harmonious, it must be fixed in place. We use a mixture of about 1:1 wood glue to water for this. The best way to mix them is in a screw-top jam jar: Water and wood-glue in, screw the top tight, shake thoroughly – finished. Important: make sure the consistency is right. Too dilute, and the glue won't stick; too thick and it won't spread cleanly through the gravel or ballast. Here once again, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. To make sure the suspension will flow properly when applied, we add a drop or two of dishwashing liquid. This will avoid the surface tension and allow the dilute glue to spread immediately from the surface through to the deepest-lying stones. Especially in the station area on our layout we find areas of ballast in many different shades of color, even the freight platform has been given a gravel surface. With this method, the buildings can be incorporated smoothly into the layout and at the end it all looks out of a single mold.

Originally we wanted to ballast the passenger platform, but we settled for the Auhagen floor slabs after all. These had to be cut according to the radius and carefully fitted in place. Then they were glued in place with plastic adhesive and fixed with clamps. Such platforms, particularly when they are to be laid on curves, are not available in the shops. This is the work for the real model railroader. But to return to the gravel: surfaces with much vehicular traffic, such as that on our building site, look even more realistic when they are shaped with the typical ruts. That's easily done: we run a model car over the surface already treated with glue with more or less pressure, and that's that!

### A lush green on the layout

Earlier, if you wanted to have a good, thick basis of green, you generally had to fall back on the traditional grass matting. This did have its problems however – above all in irregular terrain as its adaptability was rather restricted due to the use of crepe paper as base. For some time now, various companies have been selling electrostatic grass scatterers, most of which function quite well. →

**Detail work** With a broad brush, the ballast is worked until the overall picture is harmonious.

## This is what we need

**What shall we buy? With the coloring of the ballast, we want to stick as far as possible to nature.**

- **Brushes (e.g. Springer Princess) for spreading – soft bristles (expensive, but good)**
- **Brushes for fine spreading – hard bristles**
- **Pallet knife, also for spreading (small spatula, from the art shop)**
- **Several scatter bottles for various color mixtures and grain sizes**
- **Screw-top jar with wood-glue–water–washing liquid mixture**
- **Medical syringe for fine application**

Making model ballast yourself doesn't really pay off – the accessories industry offers us such a wide range. This model ballast, or gravel, is cleaned, very well colored and above all in scale grain sizes.

The practical Auhagen scatter-bottles can be used to make up different mixtures. From rusty red (next to the rails) and beige (paths and small lots) to light and dark gray. All color variations can be used and for particular areas, the colors can be mixed with one another.

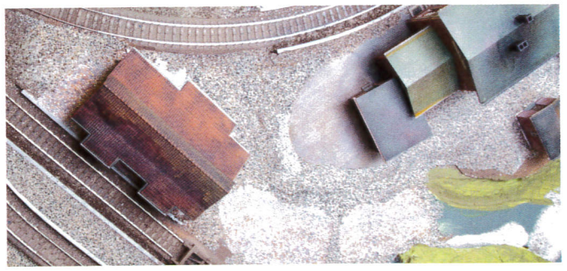
1

**With feeling** The glue and water mixture for fixing the gravel surface is best applied with a syringe.

2

**Perfect harmony** Buildings particularly can be well integrated into the landscape by using gravel of different colors.

3



**Atmospheric overall picture** Here it is clear to see how gravel areas, asphalted road sections and paving stones complement each other.

4

**A love of detail** To finish your building site even more realistically, you can leave tire tracks in the gravel with a model car.

Wonderful illusion: The tracks are seated in the ballast and the fills covered with grasses of all sizes and colors.

→ We have settled for the Gras-Master 2.0 by Noch – mainly on account of its enormous output of 20,000 volts which it conjures out of an ordinary 9 volt battery. This way, even the long stems of grass are pointing directly skywards. The unit itself looks likes a pocket torch with a grass container attached. For the different lengths of grass, there are three attachments supplied for scattering the grass from the container (see P. 50).

Now we're off: First we prepare some flocking glue: for easier brushing, we stir a little water into white glue. Now we add a little green and brown paint and stir it thoroughly and it's ready.

## The grass fibers are simply electrostatically charged

Now we fill the grass container a good half way with our grass fibers (preferably very slightly moist – simply put a few slices of apple in the container a couple of hours before applying it). According to personal taste, we put grass fibers of different types and colors in the bag. Now we clip a clean, galvanized nail in the crocodile clip at the end of the black Gras-Master cable, and lower it into the wet bed of glue. Now we switch the unit on. The grasses are now electrostatically charged in the container. We now let the Gras-Master pass gently up and down across the bed of glue and we can watch the stalks of grass fly into the bed of glue and stand up straight (see P. 50). We continue to do this until we have achieved the thickness of grass we want. After allowing a good hour of drying time, we can now vacuum up any loose fibers from the grass carpet. If we are not satisfied with the results here and there, we can always add a little grass without any problem.

### Here are the details

Actually, our grassed areas look quite attractive already, but still missing are those shades of color which make the whole thing look absolutely realistic. An observant walk in nature and along the railroad fill (and don't forget your camera for recording!) works as a source of ideas for detailing the greenery on our little railroad. These little bits of work which help perfect the areas already laid down are simply some of the most enjoyable tasks.

We've now got impressions from nature in front of us; what do we still need? Flock material in all possible sizes and colors, naturally. This is now offered by all the big accessory manufacturers in similar qualities. →

5

**Another type of platform** We have surfaced our freight platform with ballast to bring a bit of variety.

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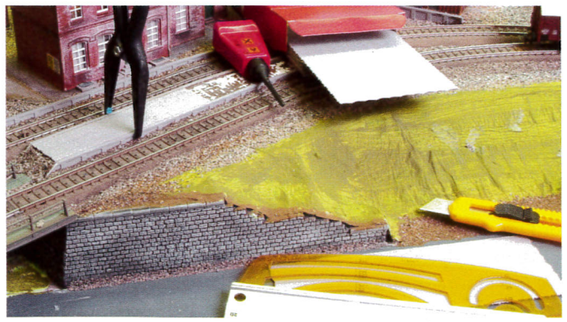


**Home made** For the platform on the curve, we cut paving slabs to the right shape, then glued them down.

Makes grass scattering so easy: the Gras-Master 2.0. It is supplied with three different sieve attachments for various lengths of grass.

## Splashes of color bring variety to the model railroad layout.

Up and down: the Gras-Master creates a wonderful grass surface.

→ The splashes of color so important for the overall atmosphere we introduce with Decovlies, offered by Heki in many colors. We will use red and yellow and bring some fresh air to the layout. To fix this, we can use spray, contact or universal adhesive. Which of the innumerable products of those now available is best for what application really has to be left to the modeler himself. In our opinion, thevariety is essential. You can very well see in the upper picture on page 85 how well the red patches fit into the otherwise uniform green.

Flock or Heki-Flor can be used to camouflage slight mistakes in the modeling work. Especially in brickwork joints, there are often gaps or unattractive slits; covered with a little piece of Flor, the slip is no longer to be seen. Here we work on the principle 'what doesn't fit is made to fit'. In the lower picture, we see at a retaining wall how well an unwanted slit in the terrain skin can be concealed with Flock and foliage. Some of the vegetation grows from the gravel-bed right to the top of the wall, well imitated by the use of Heki-Flor. Cliff tops





and furrows often attract vegetation, and in these cases too Flor and Microflor can be used. Wood-glue is applied to the appropriate places with a fine brush then the flock is applied. As a rule, the Flor can be applied quite well with the fingers; in trickier and delicate places, tweezers are used.

Now the biggest visual change to the layout is approaching: we plant trees. To make our woodland look realistic, we need trees – lots of them. We have planted at least 120 fir trees and deciduous trees, and our scenery still doesn't look overcrowded. The Busch nursery supplied us with the evergreens, the deciduous trees are from Heki's Artline series. Very important: trees are not small! We used trees up to 20 cm (8") high – and none of them looks over-sized. Our eyes process that with the natural impression very well.

But how do we 'plant' the trees? We use a hot-melt glue gun to fix them down on the layout. For trees with spreading roots, →

Brightened up: with splashes of color, the meadow looks much more lifelike.

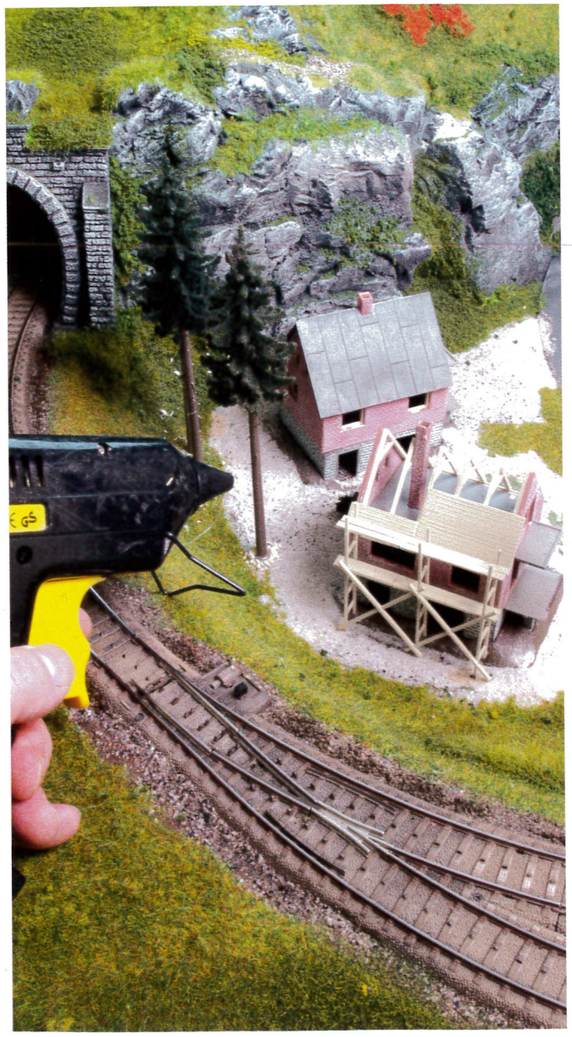
Camouflaged: the earlier gaps in the wall are no longer to be seen.

→ we only need a good dab of glue underneath, then press them down. For fir trees with wire trunks, we must first drill a little hole. Then the same procedure applies: glue, press in, hold briefly – finished. And another thing. In nature you don't as a rule see the roots anyway, so we paint these with wood-glue and flock them with some Heki Microflor. Occasionally, the plastic tree-trunks are either very shiny or are entirely the wrong color. In such cases, we resort to the paintbrush before planting them and correct the mistake with a little poster paint.

In the next part, we already concentrate on adding finishing touches to the layout. Figures and road vehicles are involved. Adverts everywhere you look. Traffic signs are erected – after all, we are at home in Germany's 'jungle of signs'. Lamps will also be put up and connected. Then you can clearly see that the little layout has life breathed into it, and play can soon begin.

*Text and photographs: M. T. Nickl*

**All parts of this series will also be found in the Internet under www.maerklin-magazin.de**



For the fir trees with a wire trunk we drill holes and fix the trees using the hot-melt glue gun.

We conceal the roots of the trees by painting them with a little colored wood-glue, then flock them with Heki-Microflor.





# Trade fairs / exhibitions / events

## MÄRKLIN OPEN DAYS AT GÖPPINGEN

**September 19/20, 2014**

Gebr. Märklin & Cie. GmbH
Märklin factory: Stuttgarter Str. 55–57, 73033 Göppingen, Germany
Märklin museum: Reutlinger Str. 2, 73037 Göppingen, Germany
**Tel.:** +49 (0) 71 61/6 08-3 13
**Internet:** www.maerklin.de
**Times of opening:** 09:00–17:00
**Prices:** Entrance is free.

This year once again, Märklin is opening its doors for visitors. Whether Märklin, Trix or LGB, visitors can look forward to fascinating impressions at the Open Days. They have the chance to observe the complexities of creating a model from its first design draft through to its first trial running, and the various departments like the die-casting, electroplating or painting departments all show off their skills. Staff are available at all points to field all your questions, and explain just why so many hands work on a single locomotive. For the younger visitors there is railroad fun and games and attractive special offers are awaiting you in the Märklin Museum.

## MODELL-HOBBY-SPIEL, LEIPZIG

**October 3 to 5, 2014**

Leipziger Messe GmbH
Messe-Allee 1, 04356 Leipzig, Germany
**Tel.:** +49 (0)3 41/6 78-89 99
**Internet:** www.modell-hobby-spiel.de
**Times of opening:** 10:00 -18:00
**Prices:** Adults 12 euro, children 5 euro

**Fun, games, model railroad**

Model railroaders, model builders, runners and collectors are all recommended a trip to Leipzig in October. All the latest trends will be on show in the exhibition halls there as well as activities to take part in.

## SUISSE TOY, BERN (SWITZERLAND)

**October 1 to 5, 2014**

BERNEXPO AG
Mingerstrasse 6, CH-3014 Bern, Switzerland
**Tel.:** +41 (0) 31/3 40 11 11
**Internet:** www.suissetoy.ch
**Times of opening:** 10:00 -18:00
**Prices:** Adults 15 CHF, child (6–16 years) 6 CHF

Play to your heart's content, as long as you like – that's for visitors to Suisse Toy, the largest toy and family exhibition in Switzerland, because laying on of hands and trying out is expressly invited.