

Whimsy vs Reality

As with so many other aspects of our model railroads there is no absolute best way to design and run your railroad.

Some modelers strive to recreate reality. Obviously no one can model a real railroad completely. Even if you picked some short industrial line with, say, only 14 miles of track you would need over a half mile to model it in the popular 1:24 scale. Similarly a relatively small house with say a 60 or 75 foot frontage would require a 2.5' to over 3' model, way too much for the space available on most of our railroads.

Some model railroaders try to create the impression of a few points and scenes on a given railroad and ignore the distance between them. Others strive for a flavor that suggests (or represents) the real railroad world without trying to model a specific scene or building. One of the advantages of this approach is that you can use commercial kits to create your railroad scene without having to modify them. You can, with a bit of care, also mix scale sizes without destroying the illusion of having a 'real' railroad in your yard.

There is yet another choice. Many railroaders recognize that they are using models and prefer to create a pleasant scene without relation to anything in the real world. These can be as simple as laying the track in your garden without regard to the size of the plants to a whimsical railroad without any connection to the real world. Several of our members have taken this route and created outstanding layouts.

Marty Hart has castles, cartoon figures and playmobile accessories all over her wonderful layout. She regularly holds open houses that please and delight school children and their instructors with plenty of moving trains and dozens and dozens of wonderful miniature scenes. Winnie and Neil Mosely have a layout with homes and shops represented by porcelain Christmas buildings, Castles built of pipes and tin roofs with cellophane windows and dragons of various sizes, colors and descriptions roaming the layout. It is a marvelous fantasy world that becomes even better at night when the lighted buildings form a backdrop for the busy trains.

The point, obviously, is that there is no one correct approach to garden railroading. You can construct precise models, create a real world flavor, or simply do whatever pleases you. Interesting and wonderful layouts can be created no matter what choices you decide to make.