

Modeling fall Aspens



When I first started modeling in O scale I wanted to have golden aspens in the fall. I modeled them with Dept 56 Winter Birch Trees with baby's breath glued to the branches. They looked OK but really didn't capture the look I wanted. I looked at the way others modeled them but wasn't really thrilled with them either. Some model them like lolly pops with a clump of fluff on the top. Others use pepperweed and wrap several branches together to form a whisk type shape and some use flocked super trees. Super trees are expensive. As you can see in the picture below, mine are at best marginal but really don't capture the true look. They look ok in pictures but still not quit there. Here is a little tid bit of info about aspens. Aspen groves are result of one tree's root system sprouting out of the



ground and producing several other trees. The largest aspen grove in the world is the result of one trees root system. Aspens have a round yet pointed leaf that is green until the fall at which time it changes to a beautiful golden yellow. They can grow to a height of 90 to 100 feet tall. Ok you ask, what has this got to do with modeling aspens? Well most modelers forget that tid bit of

information and plant aspens with a height ranging from 6 - 9 inches in single form, one here, one over there another way over there. To truly model an aspen

grove the trees must be bunched together along with small sprouts popping up around the other trees. The height should be between 20 to 24 inches in height however for most model railroads this would look too big so I would recommend 6 -13 inches as the tallest. This would be a scale tree of 50 feet high. Looks good and doesn't over power the scene. Now of course if you are using them in the back ground you will need to shrink them down so as to give a forced perspective. Here is how I modeled the aspen. If you like it try it if not so be it. After all that is what model railroading is all about, doing what you like the way you like. As luck would have it we had a wind storm. We had a large bush in the front yard that blew down. While cutting it up I realized that the twigs off of the branches were fairly straight. I thought that they would make great dead pine trees so I clipped all that I could off the branches. While cleaning them up I came up with the idea to try and use them as aspen trees so I painted them white. One of

my friends stumbled across a field of pepperweed. He harvested and dried them. You can find this at your local Michaels or Joann's. I sprayed them with Floquil's Reefer Yellow, pretty close to the golden yellow of the aspens. At first I was going to flock them with AMS foam but the flowers on the plant look like leaves so I left them alone, glad I did. I then took the painted twigs and painted small black spots on them. I left the bottom quarter inch on some the raw brown from the twig. Real aspens are dark almost black at the ground. I then cut off flowering branches from the pepperweed. I super glued them to the trunks at random locations trying to us the branches coming off the twigs until I got the desired density of foliage.



As you can see in the pictures below, I think I was able to capture the look of

the golden aspens. I am happy with the results and will continue to replace my existing Dept 56 trees.

