

# Garden Trains

## From A to Z

### *M is for Maintenance*



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# Garden Trains - A to Z

## What you will find in this document.

Discussion groups are a great way to share information. One thing that is unique to LSOL.com is our Tuesday Topic. Each week, for almost six years, we have discussed a specific group topic. It could be about bridges, or maybe you like steam vs. diesel engines. Many times it is about how people solved a problem, or what they think about a current issue or product. My favorite was several years ago. "If your railroad was a candy bar, what would it be." (Good and Plenty, Milk Dud, etc.) We have fun at LSOL.com as well as help each other with serious issues on our railroads.

Now with almost 300 different weekly discussions online we wanted to make it easier for you to use this vast knowledge base of topics. We are taking the time to edit the best answers on a specific Tuesday topic into PDF documents. We have also added photos as available so you can see just what was being talked about from each of the users.

This paper is different than one written by just one author on a topic. You are getting dozens and dozens of years of combined experience from some of the smartest people running Large Scale Trains today. Save this document and start building your own personal reference library on your computer today.

## What is LSOL.com? (Large Scale Online)

Large Scale Online has been providing information for Large Scale Garden Train enthusiasts for almost 15 years. We are the oldest, largest, and most professional web site on the Internet that is exclusive to Large Scale Garden Trains.

LSOL.com provides information in many different ways. We have online articles, videos for you to watch and photos for you to see how it is done. We also have organized and secure online discussion groups. We are the only site that requires people to use their real name. No hiding behind your keyboard making anonymous posts. Join Us.

**This document is intended for members of LSOL.com. If you have received this document and are not a member of LSOL.com we ask that you please delete it, or come to our site and use the code [AtoZ](#) to join and get a discount on your membership subscription. You will be able to access even more information like this.**

# Maintenance

## How often do you perform maintenance on your locomotives and rolling stock?

Do you make sure to get them ready before you run the first time? How often before you check them again. Before the season or after - or possible after so many hours of operation.

When you do perform maintenance, what is it that you do? Give us some detailed steps.

### Rick Henderson

When you have a fleet of geared locomotives, you tend to lubricate them, every moving part; more often, as they were prototypically, that is just about every time you use them.

On rolling stock, it is much less often and mainly focused on trucks and Kadee coupler operation. Being indoors in a basement, I have to add removing dust to the maintenance of equipment, which in itself is a good indicator of when to check the cars. If it sat long enough to gather dust, it has had time for the lubrication to dry out.

On anything new, "never" expect it to be 100% ready-to-run. I have seen several "new" items needing lubrication because what little they had dried up in shipment and storage. Check every moving part for binding because new items can have minor defects like tiny spurs from the molding process that can cause operation problems.

### George Wolotyka

I run my new engines when I get them I do not do anything unless there is a problem. I have just bought a USA SOO LINE GP38-2 that I am going to install sound before I run it. I also bought 5 Aristo-Craft SOO LINE drop end gondolas that I am installing metal wheels before I run these.

## Mike Evans

I have been pretty faithful in reoiling and maintaining my Bachmann locos that definitely require periodic lubrication. But after that I must admit I only seem to do maintenance when something squeaks or malfunctions. Wheelsets seem the most frequent candidates for a round of lubrication.

However, I religiously use CRC 2-26 spray to clean and coat my track and dissolve corrosion in track joints. Having a light film on the tracks seems to prevent the buildup of gunk on wheels and insure good electrical contact. It also makes locos and rolling stock breeze through switches and crossovers.

## Barry Reade

I have a Three Truck Shay so, like Rick says, it get a lot of maintenance. I haven't done much maintenance to my RS3 and need to look into that. All of my cars have metal wheels and most have ball bearings on the axles but, I lube them several times a year. I use Amsoil MP2 spray lube and for my grease I use the 2000 series grease thinned out with some MP2.

## Bob Freeman

Gearboxes on locos and axles on rolling stock. I run my locos a LOT and the gears eventually get out of adjustment, plus the grease tends to move away from the gear contact points to other places within the gearboxes. I usually go into my gearboxes about twice yearly to move this grease back to the places where it will do some good. I also apply white dry lube to rolling stock axles so they operate quietly and with less resistance, so I can pull MORE CARS.

Track cleaning is done on an "as needed" basis. I use a drywall sander with the finest grade paper available (much less abrasive than sandpaper) for the toughest jobs. Would love to know where to get a good track cleaning fluid that cleans rails and improves conductivity!!!

## Kenneth Allen

If I think about it, I oil my rolling stock once a year and listen to the engine real good, if I hear anything than I grease them. Not too much of a maintenance person. May have been my job I retired from for 27 years and now hate it.

## Phill Lowe

A scary maintenance story. WARNING: Stop now if creepy crawlies give you the creepy crawlies!

Two months ago I ordered numerous cosmetic parts to repair my nearly 20 year old LGB Mogul and favorite big yellow passenger cars - which are kept in a cabinet attached to the fence by the layout. I spread newspaper on the kitchen table and brought everything in to work on. All was going nicely until I removed the roof of one of the passenger cars and palmetto bugs came spilling out like some horror movie. Killed a few, grabbed up the cars and ran outside. There must have been 20 to 30 palmettos (huge American cockroaches) in each car. They had apparently been living in and "riding" in for some time as these are the most frequently used cars. Fortunately, for me, I was home alone otherwise screaming would have been added to the horror - for the roaches AND working on the kitchen table!!

The train cabinet is now on the "maintenance" list - for pest control!

## Donald Urquhart

A: Open the box and lubricate! They may have missed something in China or the lubricant may have dried out.

B: Every locomotive needs to have a Break-In, to set the gears both forward and reverse, curving to the right and then to the left, and running under load --- then re-lubricate

C: Check often --- Grease gears and lube bronze bearings as need. Plastic gears and plastic Side Rods should be wet to prevent wear.

D: If your locomotive fails, you may be faced with shipping a large package back to a repair station, a large repair bill that might exceed the cost of the engine if not under warranty, or a long wait for parts.

HINT: if you "open up" a gear box to lube it, drill a small hole in the Gear Box Cover and install a SHORT screw. Next time remove the screw and pump in the grease.

## Jon D. Miller

On the CD&StL locomotive lubrication interval is determined on the unit's amount of service. It seems like there are a select number of locomotives that are used in service on a regular basis. Then there are a larger number of locomotives that might see service just once or twice a year.

The geared locomotives are used on a regular basis so they are lubricated internally four times per year. External lubrication is usually accomplished every third or fourth run. Rod engines, used on a regular basis, are lubed internally four times per year. External lubrication accomplished at the same time as internal lubrication. Diesel, there are only four, receive internal lubrication twice a year. External lubrication is rather simple since the only place to lubricate would be the axles as they exit the motor block. Locomotives that are maybe run once or twice a year are lubricated both internal and external before being run. Least favorite locomotives to lubricate are those that have split cases. Having to remove a motor block and split the case to get at the internals is a major pain. Thankfully, there are not many of these on the roster and they are run on that once or twice a year basis.

I use Bachmann EZ-Lube or Aero-Car Lubricants. Another good gear lubricant is Super Lube. EZ-Lube, Aero-Car, and Super Lube greases do not "sling" so a lubricating film is maintained on gear faces.

Critical, in my mind, is to keep the armature shafts of motors lubricated. So many motors have bushings that support the armature that lubrication is critical for long, dependable service. **Anytime a locomotive receives an internal lubrication special attention is paid to see that armature shafts are lubricated.** Getting to the armature shafts on some locomotives can be a pain.

On new locomotives they are always opened up before running to check for lubrication and in most cases are lubed internal and external before going in service. Then they are broken in, running light, both forward and reverse, before being placed in service.

Rolling stock journals are another matter. I do use LGB gear grease on the axle ends. The LGB gear grease on axles seems to last a long time. In all the years of running I can't say that the grease attracts and holds grit any more than oil when used in journal boxes. It's rather a hit or miss with lubrication. I do pay attention to lubrication on a few cars that have Jay-Bee or Kalamzoo electrical pickup axle sets/trucks. Even though the CD&StL is just about all battery powered, these electrical pickup trucks need to be lubricated and kept in top condition to avoid wear and for those times they may run off of track power. Over the years, periodic lubrication has seemed to extend motor and running gear life.

## **Joe Fotschky**

The live steamers are the ones that get the most servicing and attention before, during, and after the run. Just the nature of the beast for those things. The electrics don't get as much attention but they are not neglected.

## **Ray Turner**

I grease the loco gear boxes each Spring and oil the valve gear and bearings every couple of months. I also oil the wheel journals on the cars every couple of months. And I wipe off the old oil as best I can as it picks up dirt

## **Paul Roberts**

Every spring I set up an assembly line and go thru the rolling stock and lube the wheels. Locos get the same treatment but depending on their running etc., I will give them lubes more regularly. As to a new loco, I figure they include those DVD's for a reason, so after I have finished drooling over the new purchase I go through and do the lubrication like the manufacturers suggest! That way, if it blows up or grinds to a halt I know it is nothing I've done!

## **Roy Towne**

The MTH DCS system displays a MAINTENANCE REQUIRED message on the hand held controller when gear greasing, axle oiling is due. So I just do it when I am told and log it in the engines manual. I check/service cars once a year. I use lithium grease in the gear boxes. LGB oil on the rest.

## **Elaine Haggbottom**

At any rate, we no longer have a layout, but when we did we serviced our Engines as soon as they came out of the box. (Every Lionel repairman would have that on their list.) After that we only serviced them as they "needed" it, and since we kept no log of time spent on the tracks, as we changed them frequently to suit our whims, or from requests, they generally would let you know if you had a problem and they required further attention.

Phill, EEK! This confirms why I never left my rolling stock out of doors; too many critters in FL are looking for a new home: wasps, palmetto bugs, etc...

## James O'Connor

JD and I think pretty much alike on engine and car maintenance. I use LGB lube oil on car axle ends, but grease would probably be okay too. When I do engine maintenance, I place a tab of masking tape on the bottom of the engine block showing the date and type of maintenance, i.e. Class A for everything to include internal gear grease and armature oiling and Class B only external oiling, rods, gears on gear engines, etc.

## Todd Brody

We do maintenance on all locos (clean wheels and check continuity) before each open house. Railcars that fail in service are pulled out and also get maintenance. Squeaky cars get oiled. The Shay requires more maintenance than most but is also most delicate (seems like something always cracks, breaks, or falls off when it is inverted) so gets run less than I would like. We maintenance new engines in accordance with manufactures' literature.

## David Maynard

I service my logging engines at the start of the season (May), and again around August. All other locos are on an as needed basis, usually at the start of the season if I didn't at the end of last season. Then if there are any problems (squeaks, hesitations, and funny noises) they will get serviced. I used to keep running logs on my locomotives so that I could adhere to the manufacturers' suggestions on service vs. running time, but that was too much like work. I do keep up the logs for service done and problems fixed but no longer are they referenced to running time, just date of service.

Rolling stock only when there is a problem, the white grease I use on the axles seems to last a long time. The rolling stock is on the "Deferred Maintenance" plan

## Chris Wolcott

I will check all new purchases and do whatever initial maintenance is required. Rolling stock gets attention as required. (The squeaky wheel really does get the grease!)

Locomotives get an oil 'round before running, especially the Live Steamers. On my sparkies the harder it is do, the less often it gets done. The ones I have that want you to dismantle the trucks to grease the internal gears don't get run nearly as often as those that can get by with just a drop or two of oil on the bushings.