Garden Trains
From A to Z

W is for Where

Better Information - Better Railroad

LSOL.com - The Leader in Online Information

GARDEN RAILROAD UNIVERSITY
GRU
Concepta Munita Profecta

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.

Where

Where is your railroad located and why?

Is your railroad in the back yard, front yard, side yard or does it go all around your house? Maybe your railroad is not outside at all but inside. Maybe you even have some in and some out. Tell us where your railroad is and tell us why it is there. What is it, other than money, that keeps you from taking over more of your yard or house?

Rick Henderson – "Inside"

Mine is inside because I can no longer get down on the ground and work easily. I also like to be able to work during bad weather. Being indoors does have limiting factors, mainly space and the compromise of tighter curves. But it is worth it to me.

James O'Connor – "Inside and Outside"

I have about 200 ft. out back and about 250 ft. inside with a connecting link between. I would like to build more out back but I have a heck of a drop off about 15 ft from the back of the house.

Joe Fotschky – "Outside"

Our Garden Railway is in the back yard. No room in the house for it so that is why it is there. Also the landscape of the backyard which has a terraced area made it a great place to build a Railway.

Noel Widdifield – "Inside and Outside"

Mine is located inside and outside. Check out my website for detailed pictures.
http://www.noelsbigfour.com/

Elaine Haggenbottom – "…..everything in the past tense"

I have to answer everything in the "past tense" as I no longer have an operating layout. But, we used the front yard, due to the fact that the exposure was designed to be for "John Q. Public" and our back yard is like a forest and designed for dogs and wildlife only. Also, the raised or terraced yard seemed to be the ideal location for our display and it mostly kept me off of the ground.

Paul Roberts – "Outside"

Backyard and under the cover of a patio (where the city of Toronto is located). We were lucky to get a house on 1/2 acre so the railway had to be in the large backyard. Also a great place for the water features etc. A few more long sidings and that will be it as the maintenance is getting to the point of Too Much!

Wesley Drummond – "Outside"

My railroad occupies most of the backyard. It is located there for reasons of more space but primarily because it is enclosed with chain link fence and the gate kept locked for security reasons. The utility company has a key to provide access for meter reading.

Geoffrey Cullison – "Outside"

The Arlington and Little Falls Railroad is confined to two loops of track on the ground in the back yard (about 350 LF of track). We have given thought to running a spur through the side yard to create a loop in the front yard for holiday displays. But, the reality is that the existing two loops in the back yard are realistically all we can maintain.

One of my goals for 2009 is to connect each loop to setup tracks in the basement so I won't have to carry trains up and down stairs from the basement.

Ron Hill – "Inside and Outside"

My railroad occupies almost the entire backyard. There is a large water oak tree in the middle and a drainage ditch running thru the middle. It is a double track mainline with sidings to be added.

Brian McMahon – "Outside"

The US&SF Ry. is located in my backyard. I would never dream of putting a layout in my front yard at least not in the Los Angeles area. I live in a quiet neighborhood but I like to limit who views my layout. Every now and again some ne'er-do-wells might happen by and God only knows what they might try.

I have an "L"-shaped backyard formed by a detached garage. I could have gone into the area behind the garage but it would have taken, one, tight curves or, two, a natural crossover (figure 8 layout) type arrangement. Being that my layout is double track main line I wanted to keep it simple. However, the area behind the garage is its own garden area lending to a comfortable location to view the trains.

John B Pedersen – "Outside"

My Railroad is in the backyard, it started out as a lark with a loop of track around a pond. As the ponds grew so did the railroad, it was a compromise with the vice president (president of the yard) and making sure the guardian of the domicile had room also. The yard is fenced which keeps out 2 legged varmints, but not the 4 legged

variety. I have about 175 feet of track, all elevated; due to the fact I couldn't remove any of the plants she had planted when I started, so I built above and around them. It turned out to be good because it makes plowing snow easy, so I can run about 10 months a year. It is probably as large as it is going to be as it is difficult to be on my knees for long.

Andrew Wills – "Inside and Outside"

I have expropriated the back portion of the yard a 12ftX40ft section [it contains 2 very large trees and is in shade all the time and not much will grow] and am currently negotiating with the department of lands and resources to run a line around the perimeter of the yard although these discussions are not going well. I have built a small 8x10 ft indoor R.R. to play with and experiment on in the winter.

Ed Johnson – "Inside"

My R.R. is located upstairs over my garage and part of the house. The size of the room is 20x40. Half is layout and the other part is my building area. The reason i went up stairs is the summers are 90/100 with 90%(or more) humidity. Winters aren't like it is further south from where I live. I live where we have a zero lot line and a 5ftx20ft back yard. Any building there would have be approved by building comm. However I hope to build a portable track for my live steamers this summer. Hot summer, hot steam what a combination.

Bill Ness – "Inside"

The NW&B takes up most of the basement. It is an indoor line for several reasons including that it is often too hot, or too cold, or too wet to enjoy being outside. None of our property is fenced, and to put a RR outside I would have to fence part of it off, which is not in the budget. There is an enticing area of about an acre that has ideal topography, but it is covered with trees that frequently lose large limbs. Also, there is no practical way to get a track to a building, and I don't want to have to carry things out to operate and I definitely won't leave things outside vulnerable to weather and theft. $$ for a dedicated RR building is not available. Also, my knees protest low work.

The disadvantages of the basement location include tighter curves than I would like and leaving access to the furnace, stairs, doors, storage room, etc. But I have 460 feet of track, and am planning to add more when $$ permits. I enjoy operating in air conditioned comfort any time I feel like it without a thought as to what the weather is doing.

Kenneth Allen – "Outside"

I have my layout outside with two branch lines in an area of 40 by 60. I had one inside, took up to much room so had to move outside, will never look back. Have a large Sweetgum tree in the middle, gives me shade, just hate cleaning up the leaves and the balls it drop. Next to the work shop so able to drive trains inside for storage which is a blessing.

Chris Wolcott – "Outside"

I want to expand my backyard railway, but the yard is terraced and it will take some creativity to go beyond the current level (And still be able to mow the grass and rake the leaves). Another barrier is the lack of funds to buy the additional track required.

Bennie Shields – "Outside"

I built my railroad in the front yard. There are over 100 trees in the front yard and there is a large enough grade change to allow for features like trestles, bridges, and mountains. The front yard is high enough above the street grade that it can barely be seen from the street.

That's the technical reason. The reality is that our Shelties live in the back yard and they chase little black things like locomotives that move on the ground.

Tom Knight – "Outside (soon)"

Well. . . I have a little different situation than the ones I have read above. We built our retirement home on 10 acres; 8 acres wooded. We built in the woods 1,100 feet from the road; no lawn BUT, when I had the grading done for the house I had an 80' X 100' area behind the house graded for my future RAILROAD.

I have 600 feet of brass track laying in the basement awaiting the start of my first loop of about 120 feet this spring. My plans (on paper) are to have five loops; a couple of waterfalls; trestles; tunnels; and eventually a loop which will go around one end of the house to the front.

I will elevate several portions with retaining walls to be able to work at waist level. Big plans? Yep! But hey. . . I won't have a lawn to mow!

Glenn Habrial – "Outside (One kid kicked a caboose…)"

I live on 2 acres of property, it is mostly flat. It has a ruling grade of about 3 percent. I wanted to run a LONG line to the back of the property (the house is on the front third,) but several factors slowed my dream.

I need access to my house through the area for coal delivery. Time to install and maintain such a big garden as that. From the time I leave my house until I get home each day is eleven and a half hours. Until recently I didn't have the equipment for moving the dirt necessary for such a big project.

Of course there is one more item but we aren't supposed to mention it here (money.) When I first started the garden I wanted the long run to the back yard but my significant other balked. But now that she has seen the RR she is more amicable to it.

Also none of my property is fenced. I have found that nobody has messed with my garden that haven't been invited to it. (One kid kicked a caboose because her brother was operating the train.)

Bob Urquhart – "Inside and Outside"

My layout is mostly backyard (over 1000 ft), plus an additional 250 ft that runs through two garages (2 levels, 7 tracks, 4 drop-in bridges) for storage. My "running concept" is to not have to pick up the trains, just drive them into the garages. Outdoors allows miniature landscape and great railroad sounds echoing off the fence! I'm still finding space for track additions and scenes, but the CFO is always watching!

Donald Urquhart – "Outside"

My home is on a corner, 1/2 acre lot in a residential neighborhood. By building in my side yard I was able to run trains right up to within four feet of the sidewalk (with a small fence between the railroad and the sidewalk). In that space there is 515 feet of track and 15 switches.

Gordon Goff – "Outside"

My railroad is in the front yard which is south of the house giving maximum sun exposure. The yard is on about a 4% grade and therefore I had to build up the low side to get the level area I need. The soil is decomposed granite with a very thin layer of topsoil so my first layout which was partially below grade would fill in with soil. After leveling and a lot of landscaping it is now at grade level.

Charlie Millspaugh – "Outside"

My railroad is outside, runs around the whole house. It is 1,000 feet of track with 19 switches and two crossings. I put 85 yards of rock on my yard, so it is completely covered with rocks, no grass. It's a corner lot, so it runs out on both streets and lots of people driving by stop to watch when I run. There is a 30 foot long cut made of big rocks that the train runs through. That's the only scenery so far.

Mark Douglas - "Outside"

Current RR construction on the M&N RY is on the south half of the front yard. Main line is (will be) about 122 feet. Initially, no switches but several planned. Also, powered track in the beginning changing to battery/RC. Then, expansion along the south side to the back yard. The layout is exposed to RV resort traffic as they drive by on their way out.

KC Marshall – "Outside"

The KC&DRR is a backyard railway, takes up approx an area of 25' x 50'.

It takes up about 2/3rds of the yard, would like to expand an additional point to point about 200 feet. It has two ponds, 2 waterfalls with about 400 feet of single line track with a multitude of passing sidings and sidings for businesses. It is a little above ground level so I can reach it from my Armstrong chair. It is all battery power with onboard RC, updating to QSI.

I have 12 engines and have reached my limit there. It is becoming too hard to move the engines from inside to outside on my lap. I would like to sell off my diesels and get a few more steam; they are just more interesting to watch at slow speed. The main thing

now is maintenance and keeping it together as most buildings are scratch built and stay outside year round. Gives them the era of the 40's look which is what I am looking for.

Ed Biesiadecki – "Inside and Outside"

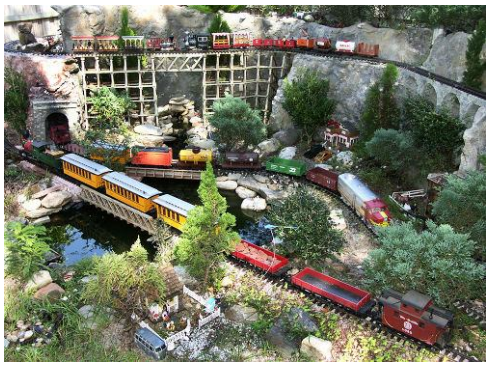
First loop is in what was my office, now the exercise room. Have a lot of shelf storage of units on the walls, with the circle around the top of the room including 2 fairly decent siding tracks.

The second setup is in what I call the Cottage (12x14 free standing) with a double loop main board, numerous sidings plus a twin track shelf (3 sides of the room)reversing trolley system.

Finally built the "L" shaped outdoor segment in a new garden bed outdoors. This year plan to add the spur into the cottage for train staging and storage. This last loop has been a problem because of the frost heave in the winter. Will be pulling up the first system this summer and re doing the track with something like the Split-Jaw Roadbed System.

Phill Lowe – "Outside"

Backyard, about 15 x 25. Right-of-way was originally a negotiation with "the other landowner"! Now expansion is a matter of time and ambition - have been lacking both! Pond is now almost double the size shown.



Mike Evans – "Outside"

I started with a simple kidney loop in the rear yard, got permission to kill all the lawn area. Next it expanded to a folded loop for longer running with an up and over segment, bridges and trestle. I then stole right of way on the side yard for a storage yard. The following year, with negotiations satisfactory, built a front yard folded loop, mostly elevated. Then there was the extension to connect to the side yard storage yard and finally a driveway crossing to go around the entire house and extended running.

I find however, that most people don't want to follow a train around the entire property. So I enlarged the front with another connecting loop. The round the house trackage is used mostly for inter connectivity. Now need to create covered (enclosed) storage space so I can leave trains intact and ready to run. The side yard storage yard and other side yard seem to present the best opportunity.

David Maynard – "Outside"

My railroad is in the backyard, about 150 feet of track in a meandering mainline and 2 reverse loops. I started small because I started big when I was in the smaller scales and never finished any of the layouts. I would like to add an engine-house and freight yard, but that will have to be negotiated with the lady of the house. So I answered that I don't have room to expand, but that isn't exactly true, it all depends on the negotiations.

Stan Young – "Outside"

My layout is located on the railing of my deck. When I bought the house I had the deck people put a deck along one side and across the back of the house. On the side of the house I had them put a 6 and 1/2 foot SQ platform, at the other end a 8X12 ft platform. That gives a 240 ft. main line. I have installed another Railing 12 Inches outside the Original one to make a loop of 240 FT. Seeing that I am 76 years old the 32 inch height of the deck railing it makes it easy for me to work on the railroad.

Ray Turner – "Outside"

Where is my Railroad? In California where it doesn't snow. Outside so the deer, gophers, moles, skunks, dogs, etc. can make a mess of it. At my house so I don't have to go so far to maintain it.

OK, enough of being a smart alike.

My RR started in the backyard and after being basically complete, it expanded into the side yard. I really don't want to make it any bigger. It's enough work to maintain as is. People who have "fallen away" from garden RRing usually do so because of the maintenance. I add a structure here and there to give purpose. I may add a spur or two for a new industry. I may add some more sound effect units in the buildings. I may add a plant or two (mostly replacements or annuals). But the RR is basically complete and it's maintenance mode now.

Photos at http://www.mysticmountainarts.com/MMRR/

Bob Hall – "Outside In South Africa"

I live in Cape Town, South Africa where apart from a few winter storms and some very hot day in summer the weather is good so my railroad is outside in part of my 'backyard'. It's a single line narrow gauge shoe string logging/mining type railway, basically consisting of two loops in a figure of eight with passing sidings between the loops, a three line depot on the largest loop and work sidings on the other loop, about 200ft of track. I enjoy gardening and being outside so the railway is mostly at ground level and winds its way between the plants and the 4 tons of rocks I used for landscaping. Extension branch now being constructed to run to the decking beside the pool about another 80ft.

Dave Marecek – "Outside"

The Lone Firr RR is in the backyard. When we purchased our lot, it was pie shape and on a hill. Part of development effort was to fill the backyard so it was flat with exception of the tree well for the large lone Fir tree.

Raised gardens and outside cedar fencing were added during the construction and these are level so mainline has no gradient. Additional dirt was added to add hills for spur lines and scenery including rock gardens. The raised gardens form the shape of an E take up all of the back yard except 2 grassed areas for the president to tan and dog to have some green space. Future expansion might be beside the house, but there is no good access solution today, so requires more thought.

David Clapper – "Inside. Outside to follow"

My former railroad is all lined up on a couple of old doors laid across saw-horses in the basement of our new home. Soon, construction will begin on a table and bench work for the inside yard and storage tracks. I'll include a loop so I can run trains while waiting for better weather to lay track outside. There will be a connecting track through a window so the chore of carrying trains and accessories back and forth will be history! I obviously will need more track and switches, so a meeting of the "Corporation" is forthcoming to decide on the finances! How much $ are available will determine the size and shape of the outdoor part of our rail empire.

Stephen Auslender – "Outside"

I'm building my modular model RR now...well, in warmer weather, really. It will run across the back of the back yard in a dog bone shape with one track in front of the row of large old trees and the return behind the trees. The tree branches start at about 8 feet up so one can walk around with no problem. The modules will be 30 inches high by 55 inches long (determined by the material I have on hand). I can comfortably run it 75 feet in length one way.

If I feel like pushing it I can run the full 100 feet of the back yard's width. If I want I can also run it about 30 feet down one side from the rear towards the front; maybe later. One reason I got into G gauge was so I can work outside and make a very long layout so I can run long trains. The idea or running double and triple headed steam locomotives, maybe with a pusher is very tempting.

I like the idea of the rear location of the railroad because the whole back area is shielded from view by stands of trees all around it. I see this as a very long time project. First get the bare modules and tracks in place and working. Then work on the scenery module by module. Looks like I have a lifetime of entertainment ahead of me.

Robert Lange – "Outside"

My railroad started in the backyard on a hillside and grew into the side yard to give it room to turn around in a flat area. After completing a loop, construction has slowed until get more walls built to flatten out the grade.

Dick Chapple Sr – "Inside and Outside"

In our side yard is the Montana Eastern RR, about 245 feet of 7.5" gauge 1.5" scale RR. In the basement is our G scale Rural Montana Branch Lines, it's an 18' by 22' area with a 32' extension down one side, eventually the far end of the extension will make its way back to the main room. Plans are to expand the Montana Eastern mainline to go all the way around the house which would give us about a 600 foot mainline to run on. Mainly fear of theft and vandalism has kept us from putting garden scale outdoors but then after 22 years we have had no vandalism or theft.

I'm considering at least a long mainline out in the side yard to run a long train. A thought has been to put the g track right on the ties of the 7.5" gauge track. Another is to somewhat parallel the Montana Eastern RR with a simple mainline. I am now in a position to run out of the garage with track and perhaps even go into our large storage shed as well. We'll see. We have about 600 more feet of G gauge track to use up yet. In addition we have a portable 13 by 26 foot G gauge layout that could be incorporated somehow. By the way, even though the layout in the basement is rather small for G gauge, I managed to keep 10' Diameter curves on three mainlines and 8' foot Diameter on another mainline plus a branch line. Also in the works are a trolley line and a place to set up two Aerial Cable cars. Lots of possibilities, the trick has been to stay healthy enough to do all this stuff. Like an old truck, I get parts replaced and body repair it seems about every three months or so.

Lord willing and the creek don't rise we'll keep making progress.

Roy Towne – "Outside (some dummy had to put a swimming pool)"

A little over 400 ft in the back yard in a modified dog bone configuration. An additional loop on one side with a small switch yard. 14 switches to connect the turnouts etc.

Can't expand due to property lines and some dummy had to put a swimming pool in the middle of the back yard! We do enjoy the pool though.

Richard Myers – "Outside (Developing)"

I am developing a point-to-point L shaped layout in my back yard. My Florida home has no basement and no space for an indoor train room. I have elevated the track 24" on 4x4 posts (saves the back and is very stable). I will backfill with dirt up to track grade after walling in the front of the layout to allow for scenery and buildings. The back of the layout is fenced on one side and block walled on the other. A small yard and turntable occupy each end. Both yards will include water towers, wood racks for loco fuel, etc. There will be about 120' of main line with 4 passing sidings and one industrial siding. I have completed the main yard with the exception of the turntable.

John Caughey – "Outside"

The Vail & Total Wreck is located in my front yard with plans for a meandering 100' branch line to wander to the back of the house where I'll add a storage/loco barn. The 10' movable bridge required is my stumbling block...

I started with a simple tri-oval, added a couple of spurs inside, one which ended at the engine shed. Next was a passing siding that clears the spur switches. I have an acre at the end of a dirt road so I don't need a fence, but I do need the SS track as the javalina's that roam through can get up to 300 pounds! Already tested! Just a little nick in a rail, easily sanded smooth.

After years in HO and then On3 fine scale, it took much adjusting to sectional track again. I am thinking of making easement curves from 2 foot sections of track as I miss the gentle easing into curves. I am thinking it would require a spiral cone shaped bending jig to gradually change the radius as I crank the handle.

Here in the S. AZ. desert, a rock garden is the easiest to maintain, I've added colorful rocks that I find in tailing piles at old abandoned mines in the area... lots of sparkles and neat colors. Even some slag from an old smelter... Now if the squirrels would stop burying peanuts in my roadbed. The oval is fine or my grand nephews, but a point to point line appeals to me, yet the price of track....

Steven Schrader – "Inside"

Mine is inside, above my new office in the new shop we just built. I have just started the base cabinet for the layout and have also decided to make it smaller than original. The original size was 12 X 60 single line and I have decided on a 9 X 34 three level to allow for a walk around area, seating and refreshment area for friends and viewers plus access to large shop electrical panels.

The other reason is to keep people out of the main stream of work going on here since this is our Trucking company shop and also my full scale Harley Davidson shop area which I am in the process of creating an old time motorcycle repair shop and custom office to include another hobby a 240 gallon salt water fish tank. I will post pictures later. Money to build a new barn or garage to just put some trains in at this time is not on the agenda, but I am getting ready to develop more of my land for a small strip type mall to include my hobby shop, and then I may go overboard to have a large layout in that also if the economy starts to correct itself.

MEMBERS ONLINE STORIES ON LARGE SCALE GARDEN RAILROADS

Here is a small sample of the articles that are online for members of LSOL.com

How Do You Get Ready for Spring?

A few weeks ago we had a Tuesday Topic about getting ready for spring. Spring has sprung. What do you need to do to get ready? I enjoyed reading the posts and thought I would share with you my experience that we have getting the BIGD LINE ready to run. It is still a little cold to run trains, but our motto on the BIGD LINE is "If the wind chill will not freeze your skin in under 30 seconds, we can run trains."

VIDEO: Sundance Central at the SELSTS (New Larger Screen Size)

Sundance Central is one of the premier indoor Large Scale Modular Clubs. Their railroad has a unique perspective in Large Scale Trains. It is a one theme modular group when the members work together to create a common look to their creation.

VIDEO: Steve Hughes Railroad (Hi-Res, Wide Screen)

Come see the Spokane Division of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Come see what 50 years of model railroading can do when applied to Large Scale Garden Trains. Come see this Hi-Res, wide screen, exclusive video.

VIGRC How to Build a Temporary Railroad For a Local Show

The Vancouver Island Garden Railroad Club exists to encourage one another in a shared interest in Garden Trains. This year, we decide to build a Garden Railroad at the show in order to show off the hobby and differentiate Garden Railroading from Model Railroading.

It's not a Railroad - It's a Love Story: The Big Pines and Lakeshore Railroad

Come read about and see a Garden Railroad that is more then just the engines, rolling stock, pond and track. It is a tribute to a man that had a BIG dream and to the women he loved deaply that made the dream come true.

The Tortoise & Lizard Bash Railroad. (Video too!)

The Tortoise and Lizard Bash Railroad was established in 1997, in Todd's words, "to give the gophers something to tear up besides the lawn." Come read the story. See the pictures and watch the video of this amazing Garden Railroad.

One Man's Love of the Circus

Tom’s circus train started by accident. One of the club's previous members had a circus train. Tom was the buyer and brought it home on Mother's Day.