



# IN THE GARDEN OF TRAINS

DAVE MAYNARD OF BALDWIN TAKES  
LIFE-LONG HOBBY OUTSIDE

By Earl Bugaile



By day, Dave Maynard spends his time servicing copying equipment at dozens of offices in western Pennsylvania.

By night, he combines his technical knowledge with the love of trains, by operating a railroad empire in his back yard on Page Drive in Baldwin. He is one of a small but dedicated group that has taken the hobby of model railroading outdoors, in the form of Garden Railroading.

"I started with Tyco HO trains when I was four years old," Maynard, 43, said of his passion for model railroading. "When my mother and I bought this house in 1996, it didn't provide any space inside for a train layout. I thought I would have to give up trains until I discovered the G scale while visiting a hobby shop."

By way of introduction, G scale is the largest of the scales or gauges that is available on the market. For example, HO, which is commonly seen in many indoor layouts, is 1/87th the size of a real train. G scale is three times as large, and are designed to be more durable, and suited to withstand the outdoor elements. Track is also designed to withstand the weather, since it is laid on a planned right of way, and stays down 12 months out of the year.

"I really wanted one of everything when I first saw the G scale trains," Maynard said. "Of course the cost was something to consider, so I had to begin small."

Maynard returned home that day and took a visual survey of his backyard. He plotted a track plan that includes two reverse loops, and decided to use stainless steel track, a new and more expensive alternative to brass. He had to wait additional time for the manufacturer to make the switches he wanted in his layout.

He had to scale several hurdles created by the landscape behind his home, including the need for special bridges that needed to be built to span natural valleys. Since no such bridges were available on the market, he bought an HO guide for building bridges and trestles, and tripled the dimensions to make them fit.

Maynard's backyard railroad was completed over the course of a weekend in 2002. "I started laying the track on a Friday night, and by Monday night I was running," he said.

Maynard said he dug a 6x6" trench along what would be the railroad right of way, and used crushed limestone for the ballast to support the track over the wiring that was required. Every piece of the track is connected to wiring to ensure smooth operation.

"Out here I'm dealing with the freeze-thaw cycle of the weather, the natural elements and also animal traffic, so I tried to make the tracks as bullet-proof as possible," he said.

Maynard said some garden railroaders even run their trains during the winter months, and even have snow plows that attach to the front of locomotives. He is not one of them. "I've tried it a few times, but snow tends to build up on the inside of the rail which leads to derailments," he said.

Each spring, he does a complete re-leveling of the track, and replaces any that has been damaged or deteriorated due to weather conditions.

The highlight of Maynard's layout is a reverse loop, which takes a train around a tree in the far end of his yard, and then reverses back the other direction. At the same time, another train is programmed to stop when it reaches a certain point while the first train passes.

"I wanted to create a single track main. In model railroading, it's almost unheard of to have the double reverse loop, because it's very difficult to do with DC power. I was able to work out all the logistics to make it work."

Maynard's layout has been visited by many neighborhood children and adults. He said most of them who have visited have been captivated by not only the trains, but the scratch built scenery and buildings, and by the way the railroad wends its way through his backyard. He has written numerous articles for online modeler's magazines on how he built his layout.

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ALCOSAN is hosting a series of public meetings to present an overview of the Plan and provide an opportunity for oral and written comments regarding the Plan and its costs. Meetings in your area include:

**Wednesday, October 3  
(6:30 - 9:00 pm)  
Baldwin High School  
4653 Clairton Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15236**

All meetings are FREE and open to the public and refreshments will be provided. For a complete schedule of ALL meetings visit [www.alcosan.org](http://www.alcosan.org) or contact your municipality.

\*The public comment period for the Plan is July 31 to October 19.

For more information, contact ALCOSAN at (412) 734-8733 or by e-mail at [public.relations@alcosan.org](mailto:public.relations@alcosan.org)



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Aside from the endless work that is associated with garden railroading, the cost of track and trains is more expensive than trains available in the more traditional scales. It is the likely factor in the considerably smaller number of people who are into the hobby. There is a Pittsburgh Garden Railway Society that has about 50 members, but only a handful of them are actually operating a layout.

Maynard belongs to the Pittsburgh Model Railroad Club, which meets regularly to exchange ideas.

"It's a hobby, and it can be as expensive as you want it to be," Maynard said. "But it depends on what you consider as 'expensive.' Diesel locomotives can run into the hundreds of dollars, but you can generally pick up a starter set for a few hundred dollars."

Maynard's rather extensive collection has been put together over the years. Currently he has numerous cars and over 30 different locomotives. "It's something you can't afford to do overnight. I only buy one car at a time," he said.

For Maynard, operating his garden railroad is his chance to relax after a busy day. From his back patio, he can hear the trains on the Wheeling & Lake Erie rolling through Longview, about two miles from his house. Then he watches his own freight chugging by on his self-created line. "There's nothing better than to come home in the evening and sit outside and watch the trains," he said.



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