

Northern Nevada Garden Railroad Society

ORDER BOARD

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www.nngrs.com

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SOME COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL GARDEN RAILROAD CONVENTION...

First of all, Jane and I traveled to Chandler with our small motor home accompanied by Jasper, our faithful traveling companion. We were located only a mile or so from the San Marcos Hotel which hosted the affair. Since this was our sixth national, most of our time was spent visiting layouts. The vendors were located in large tent-like structures within walking distance from the main hotel. The vendors were crowded in this makeshift arrangement as were the buyers – recession? No way – lots of buying! Air conditioning was a must and giant compressors were located in front of the large exhibit tents.

Some 41 layouts stretched from Phoenix to Tucson were opened, plus several ones near the hotel had night open houses. This was most impressive as the train lights and structure lighting combined with street lighting made an impressive night layout. In fact, on several we came back during the day to get another look in daylight. Many of the layouts were very well done and represented lots of work. One had 4000 feet of track with a “warehouse” 32 X 65 feet with nothing but railcars and locomotives – over 250 engines almost all LGB. Many of the excellent layouts were squeezed into backyards in Sun City type homes. Some surrounded swimming pools.

The first day or two was somewhat warm and then it cooled down. We had some six NNGRS members attending, but due to the large crowds we bumped into them only occasionally. Driving on their excellently landscaped freeways was a pleasure, but the traffic was a different matter. I think we went 400 to 500 miles in the tour of layouts.

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UP COMING EVENTS...

June 7th and 8th, The Big Train Show, Ontario Convention Center, Ontario, CA.

www.bigtrainshow.com

June 12th and 15th, Dunsmuir Railroad Days, Dunsmuir, CA.

June 22nd, Meeting at the home of Fred & Margaret Twigge, 2:00 pm in Reno.

June 5th, Hotel reservations for the 2009 Garden Railroad Convention open at 8:00 am.
<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/dentc-denver-marriott-tech-center/>

July 18th, 19th, and 20th Water and Rails rail and garden tour. www.waterandrails.org

Aug. 17th, Meeting at the home of John & Wilma Smith at 2:00 pm.

Sept. 21st, Meeting at the home of Harold & Florence Wiebke, 2:00 pm in Sparks.

Oct. 19th, Meeting at the home of Bob & Jane Gaw, 2:00 pm at their home in Jacks Valley.

Nov. 8th & 9th, 2008 Railfair, Placer County Fairgrounds, Roseville, CA.

Nov. 16th, Meeting and dinner at the home of Ray & Terri Rich, 3:00 pm in Sparks.

Dec. 6th, Annual Dinner Meeting at the Station Grille, Carson City. 5:00 pm Social hour Dinner served at 6:00 pm.

July 5th to 11th, 2009, The 25th National Garden Railway Convention, Denver, Colorado
www.2009ngrc.com.

Please let your meeting hosts know you are coming.

Notes from the NNGRS Meeting...

The meeting was held Sunday, May 18th at the home of Rich and Kathy Walton. 20 members were in attendance. Thanks for your hospitality.

We had one new member attend this meeting, Mike Norris.

Cal Ruth was given a questionnaire to complete and return to the Tune In To Kids Fair, committee.

Several members commented on their experience at the National Garden Railway Convention. Cal gave handouts from Sculpey Figures seminar and Customize your Railroad by Painting and Using Custom Decals class.

A few club members won prizes during the convention. Cal and Liz won a nice Railroad wall hanging; Jan Gaw won a Convention RR car.

At this time there were five members participating in the Water & Rails Tours: Ed & Linda Ip, Hawley MacLean, Cal & Liz Ruth, Rich & Kathy Walton and Fred & Margaret Twigge.

For the month of October I asked if anyone would be interested in going to McCloud CA at the base of Mt Shasta to ride the dinner train. I will gather information and present it at the next meeting. Ron and I stayed in Shasta and rode the dinner train and it was very nice. Several members expressed an interest in doing this in the month of October

John Latimore sent everyone an updated club roster. He asked that everyone review and let him know of any errors. John indicated that he input information for seven prospective members. Five cards were received from the Home and Garden Show and two were from the Kids Fair.

Kathy Walton is working on the membership cards and Rich will bring them to the June meeting as she will not be able to attend. The club account currently has \$403.

During the meeting Kathy Walton had alternative materials to give away that club members might find useful in their scratch buildings.

Dee Szabo

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CONVENTION...

All in all, this convention represented a tremendous amount of work by an enthusiastic crew and was most successful. The Mexican Fiesta with dancing and Mariachi band, the barbeque plus the annual banquet all helped in making this a most successful National Garden Railroad Convention. On to Denver next year!

Bob and Jane Gaw

From The Engineer...

Here your Engineer sits contemplating the mysteries of Northern Nevada weather. One day it's too hot to go out and work on the railroad and the next it's cold and wet.

Talked to Bob Gaw several days ago and he told me that the Sacramento group is not very keen on coming to Northern Nevada for a Garden Railroad tour this year. So it appears that this event will not happen this year.

I have reserved the dining room at the Station Grille in Carson City for our third Annual Dinner to be held December 6th with social hour at 5:00 pm and Dinner at 6:00. It was decided several meetings ago that last year's party was such a success that we should do it again. Watch this column for more information as it becomes available.

Several weeks ago I got all wound up and spent a bunch of hours on the web pages. Got the members area working. What you have to do to get into that part of the site is email, call, snail mail, or whatever what you want for your name and password. If you have any ideas of what those pages should contain, let me know.

As you are all aware postage was increased by 1¢ in early May. We have 8 members that appear not to have an Email address. You do have one or you have somebody that will accept an Email for you please let me know the address.

*Geoff Brunner
Engineer*

HOW TO USE SPACE-AGE LESSONS IN YOUR HOME GARDEN...

By Jim Lohse

For thousands of years growing plants has been done the slow way, on Mother Nature's schedule. You plant a seed, put it in some dirt, water it and sooner (or later) you have a plant. Common fertilizers used even today include blood meal, chicken manure, fish emulsion and other organics. Now, since a plant can't directly feed on chicken manure, it takes time for the decomposing action of water to convert the raw products into molecules the plants can feed on. This is why you start a dirt pile in the fall to use the next spring.

PLANTS IN THE SPACE AGE

Have you ever noticed that all that decaying manure and fish emulsion attracts bugs, cats and more? Are you getting tired of hauling heavy sacks of amended dirt home from the hardware store? We can take some of the space-age lessons from NASA and apply them in our own in-ground gardens. In the 1960's NASA began experimenting with hydroponics, which ultimately is intended to allow astronauts to grow plants in space. Greenhouse growers have adapted these methods and you can too!

First of all, you wouldn't want to haul dirt into space, so many methods have been developed to grow plants with no dirt, or medium. The 'ebb-and-flow' method has plant roots growing in something very light called Rockwool, where the roots are flooded by a nutrient solution periodically. Aeroponics has roots hanging in the air being coated with a fine nutrient spray. Perhaps you've seen the recent TV commercial for the Aero garden, which uses this concept.

OXYGEN IN THE ROOTZONE IS CRITICAL TO HEALTHY PLANTS

Just to stick with theory for a minute, aeroponics is intended to get the maximum amount of oxygen to the plant roots. Despite what nurseries will tell you, water and fertilizer is not the most important thing for plant roots – air/oxygen is. The oxygen content of water is small, so it's important not to overwater your plants. Perhaps this is too much theory, but please bear with me for a minute.

If your plants roots are getting air, the environment is called aerobic. Aerobic environments do not allow nasty fungus to grow. Anaerobic environments are flooded with water. Over time an anaerobic environment allows nasty critters to grow in your root zone. Have you ever pulled a plant from a pot that doesn't drain and smelled that nasty smell of old water pooled at the roots? It doesn't smell good and your plants don't like it either.

HOW PLANTS WORK – WATER OUT, CO2 IN

Now, a little more chemistry before we get into applications: Photosynthesis is well known but is only a small part of what plants do. Photosynthesis simply converts sun energy into plant energy. The plant then uses that energy to create plant sugars (carbohydrates) to grow and produce. Despite what the global warming folks like to say, I have a hard time seeing CO2 as a pollutant. Plants depend on CO2 for growth. Plants split the H2O from water, and plants split the CO2 from the air. They use the energy from photosynthesis to combine the C (carbon) and H(hydrogen) into plant sugars.

While photosynthesis is largely independent of temperature, the carbon-fixing action is heavily dependent on temperature. In temperatures between 70 and 90 degrees a plant can do a decent job of taking in CO2 and creating plant sugars (carbohydrates) for growth. When you get down into 50 degrees and below, the average plant can't make sugars, and root growth is severely limited when the ground is below 50 degrees. Likewise, temperatures on the high end will limit plant growth. The carbon fixing reaction begins to shut down above 90 degrees because plants start to overheat. They slow transpiration and this prevents CO2 from getting in through the leaf under-surface.

The last two parts of theory to understand are how plants balance the uptake and transpiration of water with the intake of CO2. A plant is basically an organic balloon. Plants take up water in the roots and use the water to stay 'pumped up.' If a plant gets too short on water it wilts, which is the balloon deflating. Most classes of plants use some water to get hydrogen as mentioned above, but the rest of the water is used in transpiration. Plants have stomata under their leaves that open and close to regulate how much water passes out of the plant through the leaves.

This is how plants cool themselves. As plants open their stomata to transpire, they can also take in more

CO₂. This is why plants grow faster on hot days than on cool days, the carbon-fixing reaction happens faster and the plant can take in more CO₂ to support that reaction that creates plant sugars.

Plants have a historic memory of a time when CO₂ levels on the planet were much higher. While ambient CO₂ is now at roughly 400ppm depending on whether you live in the city or country, plants (and people) are capable of living in environments up to 3-5000 parts per million of CO₂. When you grow indoors or in a greenhouse, you can supplement CO₂ and really see the plants take off! We outdoor growers must be happy with the ambient CO₂.

HOW TO PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE

Getting back to applications, space-age aeroponics likely won't work for you, but we can still apply hydroponic nutrients and lessons in our outdoor gardens. Consider other mediums like peat moss mixtures or 'coco coir' -- shredded coconut shells. These are known as sterile mediums or 'soilless' mediums. They have no nutrient content, but have many advantages over dirt. Standard dirt will actually hold water and nutrients away from your plants, while sterile mediums are designed to release water and nutrients to the plants, allowing for cleaner, faster plant growth.

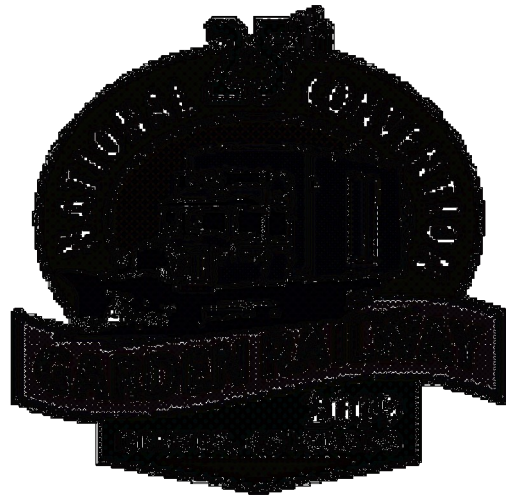
HYDROPONIC FERTILIZER IS MIXED IN WATER

When you use sterile or soilless mediums, every time you water you will mix a liquid fertilizer in with the water. These liquid/hydroponic fertilizers have the same Nitrogen – Phosphorous – Potassium (K) content as standard fertilizers, but in lower concentrations and in a form that is ready for uptake by your plants. If you look at any fertilizer it's rated with an N-P-K rating. N is for nitrogen, which plants use to grow. That's why grass fertilizer is high in nitrogen. The P, phosphorous, is what flowering plants use to produce blooms. Whether it's roses or tomatoes, you want a high-P content to produce the blooms of rosebuds or fruit.

Plants also need trace minerals like calcium. In most cases tap water contains all the trace minerals you need. If the calcium is not in a form available to the plants, or if you just don't have enough calcium in your tap water you will see the dreaded 'blossom end rot' in your tomatoes. Unlike standard soils, in hydroponics you can simply buy a calcium additive and add it to your hydro solution.

For your Northern Nevada railroad, you're dealing with a short growing season. We'll get into plant selection later, but let's assume you have two choices: slow growing plants that are cold hardy and will last many years, and fast growing annuals to be used for one season and then taken indoors or composted over the winter. The hydroponic method is especially suited to get faster growth from plants, and if done correctly you can see up to 30% faster growth in our climate. If you use hydroponic nutrients on your tomatoes you can make some great additions to your salad.

There will be more to come in future editions.



Come to Colorado and enjoy a fun-filled vacation for the whole family. Come to Colorado and experience the majestic Rocky Mountains where gold and silver mines attracted narrow gauge railroads and brought fame and fortune for the strong hearted. Visit and ride the many historic railroads still operating here in colorful Colorado. For the most enjoyable stay, we have reserved the Marriott Denver Tech Center Hotel, featuring all the amenities for Mom, Dad, and the kids. Would you believe for only \$115.00 per night? Hotel reservations begin July 5th, 2008.

The 2009 convention will be full of activities for everyone. Tours of G gauge layouts, clinics, banquet, ice cream social, barbeque, train rides, mine tours, museums and many related points of interest. We are also having a dance after the banquet so bring your dancing shoes.

We are expecting vendors from around the country offering all kinds of G-scale train engines, rolling stock and accessories. Find out what is new and visit with the people who make and sell all the train products.