

# Realistic Modelers

FREE!!

E - Z I N E

2nd Quarter, April 2011

All New  
E-Zine!

Making realistic Corn  
Fields

Airbrushing Backdrops

Nicolet Badger Northern

**PLUS**

• Walthers Modern  
Water Tower Kit Review

<http://www.wix.com/schul4/rmmag>



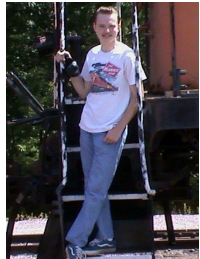
---

• **Making Miniature Cornstalks** pg. 3

Ryan Kunkle

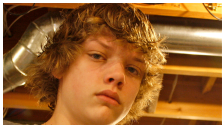
• **Nicolet Badger Northern** pg. 9

Walter Colegrove



• **Airbrushing Clouds** pg. 11

Charlie Schulz



**From the Editor**

I hope that you enjoy this new E-Zine that will be out quarterly. In future issues we will have more multi media such as video or audio. We will also have more links to resources. You may notice that we do not make any sort of prophet off of this E-Zine. This means that we can use articles written by others for our use, such as Ryan Kunkle's article about making a corn field. I thought that it was a very helpful article, so I put it in here along with a link to where I got it from and his name. He is the one who wrote it, and I did not alter it in any way.

These issues of Realistic Modelers Magazine will come out quarterly which I mentioned and will hopefully be out around these dates this year, 2011.

- January 1st
- April 1st
- July 1st
- October 1st

I hope that you enjoy these issues and they will all be posted on [\*\*\*http://www.wix.com/schul4/rmmag\*\*\*](http://www.wix.com/schul4/rmmag)

---

# Making Miniature Cornstalks

By Ryan Kunkle, About.com Guide

“Modeling Cornfields



This HO scale cornfield actually started out as Christmas garland.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

Modeling a cornfield can be a challenge. How do you get the look of large crop without breaking the bank? An inexpensive and very convincing cornstalk can be found in a very unlikely place...Christmas garland.



Christmas garland can be turned into realistic miniature cornstalks. Step 1 is to cut the garland to length.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

Artificial Christmas garlands come in several varieties. For our purposes, the most inexpensive will work just fine. A great time to acquire your corn material is the after-holiday sales. One pack of garland will do a good size field in HO, O or even G scales. You can pick up enough material on sale for only a few dollars.

Begin by cutting the garland to length. You'll need a good pair of heavy wire cutters to get through the core of the garland. The length you choose will depend on the scale and time of year you model. At harvest, corstalks reach a height of about 7 to 8 feet (2 - 2.5 meters.) Use a scale rule to set the height, or just estimate. Remember to make your stalk just a little longer than necessary so you'll have enough "roots" to plant in the scenic base.

Since you'll be making a lot of these, it is a good idea to create a master stalk or template to keep stalks at a consistent height. In general, most stalks will be consistent, although a few shorties along the outer crop rows is not uncommon.

Once you've cut all the cornstalks you can, the next step is to trim the "leaves" to length. This is not a very scientific process. All you need is a pair of scissors. Trim the green artificial needles to varying lengths as seen in the photo. It doesn't look like much yet, but in the next step you'll see



Trim the garland needles to length. This can get messy as the needles have a static charge.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

the dramatic transformation from pine needle to corn stalk. You may want to practice on a few stalks with different lengths to find the look that's best for you. A word of caution with this simple step - it can get very messy in a hurry! The plastic pine needles have a lot of static and will stick to just about anything. If you've ever had an artificial Christmas tree you may already know this. Now imagine taking that tree and cutting off hundreds of those little needles! Work over a trashbag and have a vacuum handy.





Multiple model cornstalks can be loaded in this simple jig to curl leaves and paint.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

So far your cornfield looks like a pile of smaller pine branches and a big static green mess. Now for the fun part!

The key to getting that corny look is curling the long leaves. This is very easy to do using a heatgun. You'll need a large heatgun (not just a hair dryer) to do this. Simply hold the heat gun a few inches above the stalk and in a few seconds the leaves will shrink and curl.

Start on low heat and gradually move the gun closer to the stalks until they curl. You want curling, not melting.

**Safety First!** This may seem obvious but - the heat gun will be hot! You can not hold the cornstalks while you do this.

For your safety, and to speed the production, make a jig by drilling holes in a scrap of lumber, leaving a long enough handle to keep your hands clear. You can now safely curl several dozen stalks at a time. Within a few seconds of curling, the stalks will be safe to handle.

Many brands of garland have an inner-weaving of a brown plastic needle. Often, these will form small brown tufts at the top of the stalk which nicely represent the tassels atop a cornstalk. You can create additional changes by adding a little paint.



”

A light tan spray paint is used to turn our evergreen garland into autumn cornstalks. You can leave a more or less green show through to model earlier or later seasons.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

How you finish your cornstalks will depend on the season you're modeling. If you live near a cornfield, the best way to get started is to take a picture around the time you've chosen to model. The height and color vary with the season.

## Summer Corn

The deep green color of the pine needles is not a bad match for summer corn as it is. If you're not completely satisfied however, the stalks could be painted to any hue. Painting each stalk by hand would be time-consuming and, with most of the stalks hidden in back rows, a largely-wasted effort.

The quickest method is best for this job. Use either an airbrush or a spray paint to coat the stalks in bulk. Spray the stalks in the jig used to hold them during the curling step. Remember to work outside or in a well ventilated area with proper safety protection when spraying paint.

## Tassels

Towards the end of summer as corn reaches maturity, the signature golden brown tassels form at the top of the stalks. When looking down on a large corn field, this little splash of color really stands out and helps to define the individual crop rows.

When using garland with a brown inner-weave, the brown needles themselves will often pop up like tassels automatically. But this is not an exact science, and it doesn't always work as planned. How do you get the tasseled look without making extra stalks?



---

It is easiest to paint the tassels after the corn has been planted. An acrylic or oil-based golden-brown hue will work. Use a paint roller and apply a light, even pass over the top of the rows.

### Autumn Corn

Feed corn is often left on the stalk into the autumn and not harvested until the entire plant has turned a tan color. Floquil Depot Buff is a close match. Apply with an airbrush, or find a similar hue in a spray can. Using the curling jig, apply an even coat to the entire stalk. You can let a little or a lot of the green show through to show stalks that are in the process of turning.

### Highlights

Most of the corn will be largely hidden in back rows. If you want to add any highlights or extra color to the outer row of corn, this can be done with a small brush once the corn has been planted.



”

Packing cornstalks in tight rows yields realistic results.

©2010 Ryan C Kunkle, licensed to About.com, Inc.

### Preparing the Field

A piece of styrofoam insulation works well for a scenic base. The wire stalks will press in easily and remain upright. Keep in mind that the stalks will be closely spaced, so there is no great need to detail the entire base. A coat of brown or black latex paint is all that is required beyond the first two or three rows.

---

Mark the rows of corn with a pencil. Keep the contours of your scenery in mind. Most farmers plant across a hillside to prevent excessive runoff. Run your rows accordingly.

Add a thin layer of dirt to the perimeters of the cornfield. You only need to go a few rows deep.

### **Planting Corn**

Simply press the wire stalks into the foam to plant. Keep the spacing tight and the rows parallel. You can easily make up for any slight height differences at this point as well. It is easiest to start at the back and work forward.

You will probably be surprised at how many cornstalks you're using. Even a modest field can consume hundreds of stalks. If you run out, simply go back and make more. You probably won't have a really good idea of how many you need until you get started.

In a little time, you'll have a detailed cornfield that will be the envy of many modelers...none of whom will believe it started as a Christmas decoration."

<http://modeltrains.about.com/od/Scenery/ss/Making-Miniature-Cornstalks.htm>

By Ryan Kunkle, About.com Guide



# Nicolet Badger Northern

## The Last Link to Laona

By Walter Colegrove

In 1980, there were changes afoot in Midwestern railroading. The bankrupt Milwaukee Road decided to abandon a few less-profitable branch lines to cut losses, thus getting the government involved and creating new regional railroads such as the Chicago, Madison and Northern and the successful Wisconsin and Southern Railroad. At this point, the Chicago and Northwestern had been abandoning trackage in large numbers for the past two years, with few saviors of freight service for these lines. The next branch on the chopping block was a line connecting Green Bay, Wisconsin to the C&NW's Watersmeet Division at Scott Lake, Michigan. Completed in 1900, the Laona line was the economic lifeline of Forest County; by 1979, it was a financial burden to the struggling Northwestern with only a little pulpwood traffic to sustain it. So the Interstate Commerce Commission gave the Northwestern permission to abandon the line.

The Nicolet Badger Northern was formed on the basis the following year to save 37.8 miles of former C&NW track between Wabeno and Tipler,

Laona & Northern 103 at Laona, WI, 15 Aug 1980, by Karl C Henkels

Don Ross Collection



and the little remaining freight business of pulpwood. Later the railroad caught on and also caught on a new customer, Nicolet Hardwoods Corporation in Laona operating on the former Connor Lumber Company mill, when the Connor railroad, the Laona and Northern fluctuated completely to the tourism business. The NBN itself took a turn toward the tourist trade, with excursion and dinner trains from Laona to Tipler and Wabeno. But passenger train service wasn't enough to keep profits up, and so like the predecessor C&NW, the NBN planned on abandoning its trackage when it went out of business on December 30, 1994. Since the

---

Laona and Northern abandoned its northern terminus and interchange with the Wisconsin Central about five miles north of Laona at a point called Laona Junction, and now the Nicolet Badger Northern defunct and threatening to cut Nicolet Hardwoods and Precision Fabricating from rail service, the town took matters into its



own hands. The city, operating under Rat River Transportation Company, kept rail operations going until 2007 over 7.7 miles of NBN trackage between Laona and Laona Junction (east of the L&N connection). So, although there were many attempts to

revive rail service to Laona, eventually everyone's expectations were realized that the revivals would not succeed. But it shows that even with the odds against it were many; it survived much longer than many other shortline projects trying to preserve part of the route of the 400.

Modeling this defunct road may be kind-of difficult if you try to get in every detail unless you're big

on scratch building and repainting. The Nicolet Badger Northern owned ex-Laona and Northern Vulcan 65-ton switcher # 103, and to this date, no ready-to-run manufacturer makes any Vulcan diesels. You may be able to convert a Bachmann GE 44-ton switcher, but otherwise this locomotive may have to be scratchbuilt. Another scratchbuilt component would be the unique ex-Marinette, Tomahawk and Western snow plow. The Nicolet mill may be modeled if you use the Walthers Cornerstone Mountain Lumber Company Sawmill. The NBN leased an ex-Michigan Northern Baldwin RS-12, Stewart makes a nice model, although you will have to repaint it. Another repaint job you may need to do is the ex-Marinette, Tomahawk and Western EMD NW-2 # 62, which Broadway Limited Paragon-2 makes, which involves sound. Rolling stock will be easy, the NBN mainly transported pulpwood, Walthers Goldline makes a variety of pulpwood cars in the late-80s early-90s time frame. I believe there were two pulpwood transloading sites in Wabeno and Tipler, and modeling the pulpwood operation is easy, grab up any semi with a logging trailer and add a Herpa telescoping crane to the trailer. The mill will take center-beam flatcars which are made by many manufacturers.

This railroad was very interesting in all aspects and would be a possibility to model.



---

# Airbrushing Clouds

Charlie Schulz

The backdrop of your layout can be one of the most important things in making it look realistic. If you are willing to take some time and buy an airbrush, you will end up with a great looking realistic backdrop.

Your backdrop should not be too significant, otherwise it will take away from the scenes in front of it. I looked at many pictures of real skies that I thought would look good for a partly cloudy summer day in Southeastern, Wisconsin. The higher you look at the sky the darker and richer blue it becomes. If you do research clouds like I did, you will realize just how detailed they can be.

To do this project you will need an airbrush, and white, blue and black paint. I use cheap Apple Barrel acrylic paint found at Walmart, and A Badger Double action airbrush. Your airbrush does not need to be expensive; Badger sells decent single action airbrushes for under \$20. If you later find that you like air brushing, and want a





more quality airbrush that can do more, I would recommend getting a double action airbrush. Double actions start at around \$60

depending on the brand.

You will start off with a base coat of plain white 50/50 acrylic paint with water. On this step, you should get the basic shape of the clouds. The nice thing about the airbrush, is that you can have a variety of types of clouds. Don't spray the clouds solid white, but have a variety of light areas and more solid areas on each cloud. This is where looking at real pictures will help you determine where to have the more solid areas

and lighter. Once you are happy with the amount of clouds and the shape of them, use your black and blue paint. Mix one part blue, one part black and another part white with 50/50 water to get a blueish grey color for your low-lights. Next do a very light layer of this mixture on the clouds where appropriate for the pictures you are looking at. Usually it will be dark at the bottom of the cloud and in different areas where shadows are cast or it is rainy. Adding these shadows on the bottoms of them, really make the clouds pop and look very realistic. The whole point of doing the clouds with the airbrush is so that there aren't any sharp edges and so that your eye isn't drawn



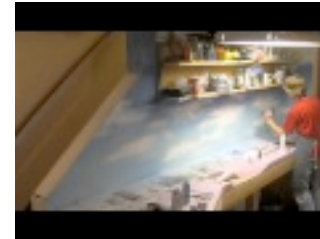


to the backdrop first. It is definitely ok to have a detailed backdrop, but this way makes the clouds less punctual while being realistic. Sometimes you see layouts with just plain blue skies. That either means that the person is too scared to paint clouds, or wants it to be a perfectly cloudless day (which can be realistic). This is an easy way to create the perfect backdrop. I would say that if you are still getting used to the airbrush, practice these clouds on a scrap board. You can test what techniques work best for you. Something that I notice with the airbrush is when you are closest you can do the most detail work, when you are farthest away, you can cover a bigger area the best. For me this was a very fun



<http://www.wix.com/schul4/rmmag>

and inexpensive project, with the paint being around \$2 a bottle and already investing in the airbrush. Take your time with this project, because sometimes less noticeable, your backdrop shows just how realistic of a layout you have.



## **airbrushing clouds**

follow link above to watch Charlie airbrush his backdrop

Join Trainlife!

<http://www.trainlife.com>

More than just a hobby.™



# Walthers Cornerstone HO scale Modern Water Tower

Charlie Schulz

I recently purchased the Walthers Cornerstone, Modern water tower and I must say,



Figure 1

it is a very nice kit and can be well used on anyones model railroad. If you model modern times, you will see these everywhere. Not

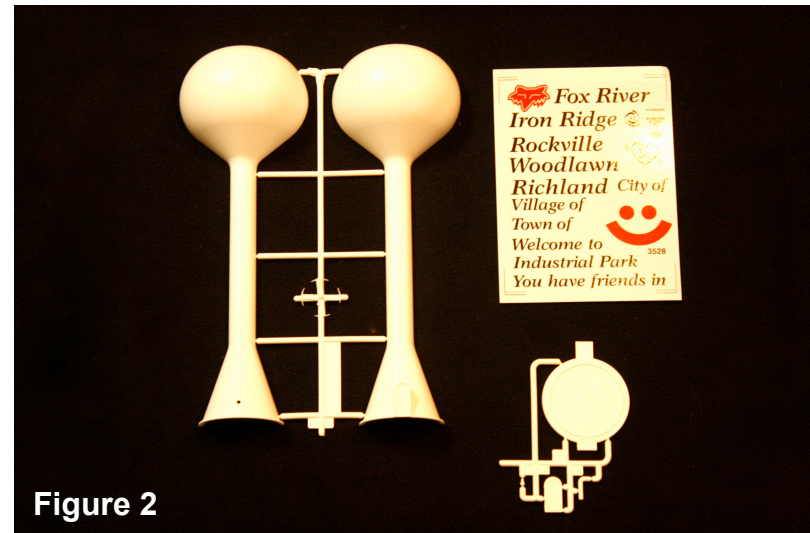


Figure 2

necessarily along the tracks, but if you have a town scene or are modeling near a town, you will need this.

The main body, as you can see in figure 2 above, comes in 2 halves. It was a very simple kit. you cut off the body and the base, door and overflow pipe from it's sprues. You simply glue the two sides together, glue the base and door on. You also put the overflow pipe into place on the direct opposite side of the door. After all of the glue was dry, I painted it using an airbrush with a very light tan color. The plastic mold color is pure white and if not painted will very obviously look like plastic. As you can see in figure 2, the kit also includes a set of decals. On the decal sheet are



various common towns such as Rockville, Iron Ridge, and Richland. On the sheet there are also warning decals like warning signs and no trespassing. I decided to not put any decals on because I am not modeling any specific town and also for the reason that there are many unlettered water towers. I did put the warning decals by the door and on the side. They turned out very nice. Like I said, very very simple, yet effective in getting the theme of it being a modern layout. Once I get further along with my layout, this will find a place and I will make a scene with a fence around it.

