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The WVM Spectacular at the Maryland Fall Home & Garden Show

By Jeff Mitulla
Photos by Dusty Suit

Our organization was honored, to be invited to participate as the feature display at the Maryland Fall Home & Garden Show, at the Cow Palace building in the Maryland State Fair Grounds located in Timonium, Maryland. And participate we did. This was one of the most ambitious displays put on by the members of our club in quite a few years and it turned out beautifully. I would like to thank our partners, Howard's Landscaping & Water Gardens (waterfall & pond, all of the trees, shrubs, flowers & mulch), Outdoor Designs (Gazebo), and the Home Depot (landscape timbers & patio blocks) who loaned us all of the materials for this display. If you need the aforementioned services, I would hope you would consider their services. In addition, a very big thank you goes out to all of our members who worked so hard in putting this display together and then staffing it during the show. Everyone worked really well together and it showed in the resulting very professional looking display. I take my hat off to all of you.

Our setup started on Tuesday the 16th of October by members helping Don Howard and his folks set up the waterfall and pond, the gazebo arrived, and we picked up the patio blocks and landscaping timbers. By the end of the day, water was splashing down the waterfall into the pond, the gazebo was roughly placed, and the formal sitting area was complete.



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Setup continued on Wednesday with a lot of progress being made. Rockwork for the waterfall and pond was being finished, track was being laid, trees, shrubs and flowers were being put in place. By then end of the day, all of the track was installed and ballast was poured on top, and we were able to run a track-cleaning locomotive over the outer loop. The display was finally taking shape.

The final day of setup dawned and our members continued with running all of the wires required for the track power feeds, switches, switched sidings, and the automatic reversing circuit. Adjustments were made to the shrubs and flowers and many more pansies were added to various locations throughout the display. Many test runs with the track cleaner locomotive were made to ensure that everything was running smoothly and we had minimal problems with the mulch that covered the display. Buildings, vehicles, and people were added to bring the display to life, all of the final details were adjusted and rolling stock was brought out and placed onto the track. Finally, everything that was not needed was put back into the trailer for storage so that the show production folks could carpet around the perimeter of the display.

On Friday morning we had a little time for some fine-tuning of the display, placement of our information table and distribution of literature. I noticed that people were starting to line up outside the Cow Palace at about 9am to get into the show. By 10am, there was a line outside stretching up to the end of the building. Promptly at 10am the doors opened and the 2001 Maryland Fall Home & Garden Show was officially underway. Since the feature display was located right at the entrance where people bought their tickets, ours was the first display people would see and we had visitors immediately. The show organizers had planned well by placing an open area immediately to the right of our display with a couple of benches in it, so that visitors could watch the display and ask questions. There was not much time to revel in the opening, as I had to get ready for the first seminar of the day. I had made a commitment to the show organizers to hold one seminar each day with the topic being "Starting your own Garden Railway". Being the first seminar of a show, with the show only being open for an hour and having such a specialized subject, your attendance expectations are not very high. I was astounded to have had about 10-12 attendees, all of which were very interested in the topic. Overall attendance was light during the course of the day and got heavier during the late afternoon and evening hours.



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Saturday and Sunday were very similar with attendance being moderate to heavy during the course of the day. Our members were having fun running the trains and answering questions for lots of visitors. We had a track crossing installed between the trolley and the inner track loop that needed constant monitoring by a member in the gazebo to avoid collisions. I had designed a collision avoidance circuit, but did not have a chance to install it. I want to thank our various members who made the trains run smoothly and kept the collisions down to a minimum. But we did have a few minor collisions... much to the delight of our visitors. Maybe next time I can have Gomez Adams and Fester design some better accidents. I would like to thank Alan Mole for running the seminar on Saturday. I was able to run the seminar on Sunday again. Seminar attendance for both days was similar to Friday. It was very good to see approximately 36 different people attend a seminar on starting your own garden railway. The display perimeter was always full of people, many not having seen trains like ours and being astounded that our track could stay outside all year, and that the trains were weather resistant. Many people showed great interest in large-scale garden railroading and our members were kept busy with answering lots of questions. Our display looked so professional that many people were surprised to hear that the club designed it. We managed to sign up a few people right at the show as new members. Welcome to those new members.

At 6pm on Sunday, the show closed and our tear down commenced. By about 9:30pm we had removed from the display, boxed, and stored in the trailer all of the train related items. We had removed and stacked the patio blocks on skids for their return to the Home Depot. Many members had been helping Don Howard remove trees, plants and flowers from the display. Don had sold a few of the plantings and had sold the waterfall and pond to some lucky individual. We returned on Monday to return the timbers and blocks to the Home Depot and help Don and his folks tear down the rest of the display. By about 2pm, it looked like there had never been a beautiful display there and new workers were already decorating for the next event.

A number of pictures accompany this article to give everyone not present an idea of what the display looked like, and to those that were present, bring back some good memories.

On behalf of the club, I would like to thank the following people for giving our club the opportunity to participate in this display:

S&L Productions Inc.: Ms. Linda Brazil and Mr. Jon Plummer

Also, on behalf of the club, I would like to thank the following people for helping us with their loan of materials and labor for this display:



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Howard's Landscaping & Water Gardens, Glen Burnie, MD 21061, Tel: 410.761.0766: Don Howard, Ross Clark, Frank Wasielenski & Keith Howard

Outdoor Designs, 607 Route 15 N, Dillsburg, PA 17019, Tel: 717.502.8186: Craig & Patricia Farechok

The Home Depot: 125 Industry Lane, Cockeysville, MD 21030, Tel 410.667.8200: Jay Ayd, Pat Romeo, & Larry Plunkett

And last, but certainly not least, on behalf of the club, I would like to thank the following WVMGRS members for their tremendous help in putting this display together, many of you went beyond the call of duty (names are in no particular order): Ken Dugan, Joyce Mitulla, Herman Becker, Cal Saltzman, Dusty & Verna Suit, John Waters-Heflin, Dave Lyon, Carol Hurd, Arnie Hoffman, Alan Mole, Paul & Susan Staller, Jerry & Anne Quinn, Mike Carski, Benjamin Bates, Jim Strong, Roger Snyder, Bob Madel, Alan Sinclair, Eddie Cassard, Harry Bauhaus, Neil Greene, and Ralph Fox. If I have forgotten anyone, please forgive me, it was a long show and is not intentional. Please remember that without all of your hard work displays like this are not possible.