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When thinking about the number and type of trees to be featured on a model railway its worth asking yourself what type of trees you need to purchase or to make for your layout:

- Which season do you want to model? This will greatly affect the appearance of the deciduous trees on your layout though the evergreen ones will look much the same all year round. Companies do make trees with foliage to suit all seasons of the year. However, do not mix the seasonal colours of trees within the same scene on the layout.

- What is your budget for trees on the layout? You may have to balance the quality of the trees you buy against the quantity that you need.

- Where is the layout based? Is it on a windswept section of railway above the tree line, or set in a tree lined valley?

- Are the trees to be a focal point of the layout or just scene setting? If just a couple of large well-established trees are needed, we recommend purchasing the

best quality tree that you can afford. In contrast if you are modelling a line running through a section of forest you will need a lot of trees quickly! That's where buying bulk packs of trees might be a good idea but also using your best trees at the front of the forest.

- Is the tree to be fully modelled? Depending upon its location on a layout each tree can be modelled either as a single specimen tree in full or if at the edge of a forest just on the viewing side.

THE AVAILABLE TREES

There are an increasing number of model tree manufacturers. You will find that the larger manufacturers tend to offer two alternative ranges of trees. Generally the more recent introductions to their tree ranges the better looking the trees will be. For example, Busch, Faller, Noch and Woodland Scenics, all retail basic and quality tree ranges. Whilst some companies do still sell pieces of

lichen stuck on the top of a shiny plastic trunk we would not suggest that you use any on your layout except at the top of a hill well outside normal viewing distance!

It goes without saying that usually the higher the price tag on a tree the better the model. Some companies specialise in architectural model trees (for example, 4D and Treemendus) and these are generally of a very good standard. Manufacturers of architectural tree models also offer a bespoke tree building service where you require a specific size, shape and kind of tree. These are ideal for single standing specimen trees and those near to the viewing edge of a layout, where the budget permits it.

Do not give up hope of owning exquisite models of trees if your budget is limited. The good news is that many of the tree models of mainstream model railway accessory companies are now of good quality. These manufacturers include Anita Décor, Bachmann Scene Scapes, Busch, ER Décor, Faller, Gaugemaster, Grande Central Gems, Heki, Hornby Skaledale, Model Landscape Company, Noch, The Model Tree Shop and Woodland Scenics.

Some firms such as Bachmann Scene Scapes, Faller, Gaugemaster, Heki, Noch and Woodland Scenics retail bumper bags of trees – these usually represent good value especially when you need a lot of fir trees. The Woodland Scenics trees of this type are known as Ready Made Tree Value Packs and are sold in 10 different colours, six different heights and three main types (deciduous, autumn and conifers). The trees in these packs can be visually improved by applying a little lighter shade good quality scenic material to brushed-on PVA glue.

The topic of model trees is vast. There are many kits available that make up good products such as the Heki larch tree illustrated here. Sea Moss is a material that is also becoming increasingly popular with layout builders.

SIDETRACKS...

a miscellany of items

● A puzzle solved?

Under a B & W photo by Graham Allen on P30 in SE 102 we asked if any one knew of the location and the class of locomotive shown. Several members have identified the loco as an Eb3/5 a super-heated 2-6-2T, numbered in the series 5801 to 5834, and built by the SBB as a standard class from 1911 to 1916. Several examples still exist. The location illustrated is in the throes of re-signalling; on the right is an old disc signal, while the early pattern colour light signal next to it has an 'X' showing it is out of use. A member has suggested that it could be in the Genève area, but other readers think it could be in Oerlikon in 1955, when the area was re-signalled, or in Olten.

● MOB Vans

On P29 of SE 102 J.W.Mills wonders why an MOB van was at Les Pléiades on the CEV. Michael Farr has noted that since freight traffic almost entirely disappeared on the MOB they had a lot of spare covered goods vans which are now used as stationary storage vans. The former 'Pepsi' advert van seen in the photo (Gk 562, with new doors so you cannot see the Pepsi logo) and the BVA/AWZ van (Gk 509) have been doing this duty at Les Pleiades for at least the last twelve years.

● Ticino connections

Jim Patterson has written to clarify a paragraph in his article in SE 102. The through bus service from Locarno along the northern shore of Lago Maggiore to Intra in Italy, is in fact just a connection in the Swiss village of Brissago 2.5km from the border. FART run a half-hourly service (Linea 316) to Brissago where some Italian services run by VCO cross the border to connect with them. The Swiss Kursbuch does not show these connections so you have to obtain the necessary information locally.

● Ae6/6 workings

It appears that these 60-year old locos may be staging a comeback, as rather than the 10 scheduled workings noted in