

## ***Making NZ Pine Trees with Sisal & Wire*** ***By Grant Morrell***

Pinus Radiata: Pinaceae is made up of 250 species, the pines are widely distributed in New Zealand. It is an evergreen conifer, reaching a height of 15-35 meters.

In the modeling world these trees are hard to come by in any scale so I decided to have a go at them using the bottle brush method. First is source out the material required which wasn't much and was found at any garden or Hardware shop; a ball of sisal (garden lashing) green is best to get and some wire. I bought 2 sizes 18G and 16G, the 16G for bigger trees and the 18G for the smaller ones or all sizes if you are modeling for HO scale.



18G wire



Garden lashing (sisal)

Other tools required are;

- a. wire cutters
- b. vice
- c. scissors
- d. vice grips
- e. plastic clothe peg

First we identify the height of the trees we want to make, let say 14" (80ft tall in 1/64<sup>th</sup>). We cut the wire at around the 32" inch mark and fold it over on itself, place in the vice with about 1.5 inches of the folded end sticking out, with the vice grips we pinch the end and twist to form a base of the tree (bottom) to stick in the ground. Remove from the vice and reverse to place the twisted end in the vice making sure that the two lengths of wire are on top of each other.





You may have to do a bit of straightening here of the wires. At the end of the wire bend a short bit up and down on each piece this aids the string to slide up easier on the opening. Next we get our string and as we are starting at the base of the tree the lengths of string will be at there longest, around 4 inches. Cut the straight and then unravel to expose the fibers of the strands then slide this up the sleeve between the wires to the vice end. We repeat this many times over slowly reducing the length as we go.

Sometime the spring tension between the wires gets a little weak, so after 20 or so pieces have been slid up place the cloth peg to squeeze the wire and continue with the insertion of the fibers, you should do about 50 – 60 for a thick tree.

When you are happy that there is enough fiber for your tree then we carefully push the ends of the wire back inline and with the vice grips pinch the end of the 2 wires together, whilst hold the grips in one hand, remove the peg and a-line the fibers then start twisting the grips round and round until the tree is formed, the more you turn the tighter the group but be careful as if to much you could twist and snap the wire right off and have to start again. You'll work it out.



After twisting we remove grips, snip off the end stub of wire and remove from vice. With our hand we rub the tree from the bottom up through our finger formed in a ring shape to fluff the fibers in an upwards direction squeezing at the top. With the scissors we now snip off unwanted fibers rotating the tree as we go. When done, place in to a piece of styrene and start the process all over again.

**Note:** For my base to give a bit more of a visual effect I get a piece of flax wood about and inch long, drill a hole through the centre and slide up the base.

After a set amount of trees have been made the next step is to cover them with some foliage.

Material required for this is;

- a. Spray bottle with 1-10 diluted glue (PVA)
- b. Spray can of Matt black paint
- c. large jar/container of Brian Rouslton's Scenic Material of 'Dark forest' and a small jar of his 'light brown foliage' and 'autumn foliage'.
- d. a large flat portable work area (I use a large styrene lid – used for applying the foliage material)
- e. large cardboard box – (use as a spray box for the glue and matt black paint)

First job is to darken the centre of the tree to give it some depth, this is done by at close quarters in the box, we spray the wire stem /trunk turning the tree as we go – do all.

Next we (*in the box*) spray the whole tree quite liberally with the diluted PVA then move to the lid (*styrene lid*) to apply the foliage as we rotate the tree, this application may have to be repeated 2-3 times depending on your application technique. Near the end apply (light dusting of the autumn and browns then finish off with a light spray of PVA (in the box), leave to dry for 24hrs. Repeat all for next tree. End.

