MAKING TREES FROM SEDUM

Bob Sprague

Step 1: Get your spouse to plant sedum, and watch it grow. The variety I have seen in this area is Sedum "Autumn Joy." It is becoming quite popular. Keep your eyes out for plantings around shopping centers, your neighbors' yards, other places where you can steal it in the middle of the night.

Step 2: Harvest the stalks mid-winter. Let them dry out. I have not experimented with preserving them with glycerine, but trees made this way have survived 7-8 years so far with no apparent deterioration. They are brittle, but if they are broken they are cheap and easy to replace or replant.

Step 3: Remove flower buds with comb or scissors. Make sure to get any loose material off. You may want to experiment to see how much trouble you really want to go through, since the foliage may hide most of the fine branch structure. If you have some fine specimens with lots of fine branch structure, consider using them as dead trees.

Step 4: Dip stalks in grey-brown latex paint thinned 50/50 with water. I use American Traditions 333-3 "Argent."

Step 5: (Optional) Paint stalks with alcohol and India ink mix (A&I - 1 pint 91% alcohol and 2 tsp india ink) to bring out trunk detail.

Step 6: Break off the stalks at desired height. Remember that trees in any particular forest tend to be relatively consistent in height as they compete for sunlight with one another. Save the ends you break off.

Step 7: Tear small clumps of polyfiber -- stretch them out as thin as possible -- and add to stalks. My favorite so far is the dark green material available from JTT Microscale -- it tears off in very fine layers. The goal is to stretch the material almost to invisibility so that there are no thick clumps left.

Step 8: Spray with spray adhesive or hairspray. You don't need too much.

Step 9: Apply foliage. Any scenic product can be used – I like the Noch leaf flakes which are moderately priced. Dribble it on from the top, so that most collects on top of the polyfiber netting.

Step 10: Interesting results are available with the new Turbo Tree invented by Hal Reynolds (http://www.atlanticscalemodelers.com). It applies foliage in an even pattern and reduces waste.

Step 11: Plant the stalks by putting them in place and dribbling gap-filling CA down the trunk, then spraying with CA accelerator. I've had best results with Zap-a-Gap. After a few seconds the joint is rigid, and planting goes very quickly.

Step 12: Plant the trees as close together as possible, and intersperse leftover ends of stalks to create illusion of more trees in any given space.

SEDUM TREES MATERIALS LIST

Sedum
Comb
Foam base
Grey-brown paint like American Traditions 333-3 Argent
Polyfiber
http://www.jttmicroscale.com PF-1006 Dark Green 16 gr. - my favorite
http://www.micromark.com item #84152
Foliage
http://www.sceneryexpress.com
ground foam
Noch leaf flake flock - my favorite
Heki leaf foliage
Silflor leaf
Noch professional
Spray mount
TurboTree (http://www.atlanticscalemodelers.com)
Gap-filling CA (Zap-a-Gap)
Accelerator (Zip Kicker)