Action-packed toy trains

In the years following World War II, it seemed that just about every boy wished for a colorful train or an action-packed accessories from Lionel or American Flyer. In the 1950s, electric trains were the number one toy for boys – and these toys are just as exciting today.

Today's O gauge and S gauge have the appearance, ruggedness, and heft of electric trains produced in the 1950s, but today's models feature state-of-the-art electronics, including realistic sound systems and digital, wireless control systems.

Because of their strong heritage, today's toy trains remain compatible with those manufactured 50, 60, and even 70 years ago. Track sizes and basic electrical functions have not changed, so it is a common sight to visit a toy train layout and see a locomotive manufactured in 1953 running side-by-side with one manufactured a half-century later.

Hobbyists like Rick Wright combine newer locomotives with vintage Lionel accessories and built-from-scratch structures for a unique toy train layout.

GARDEN RAILROADING

Enjoy model trains outdoors

A garden railroad is a fascinating addition to any landscape and is a great way for the whole family to enjoy model railroading.

A garden railroad brings your trains and scenery outdoors. Mountains are made of dirt, rivers are real water, and rocks are actual stone.

Part of the fun in this hobby is following the practices of a full-size railroad and working with the landscape. The "garden" part of garden railroading is another fascinating aspect of this hobby. Many nurseries and specialty plant growers sell dwarf and miniature versions of all types of plants. These specimens are ideal for garden railroads since they fit with the scale of the trains by having smaller features and a slower growth rate than their full-size cousins.

Garden railroading is a deep and exceptionally rewarding hobby anyone can enjoy. It might be the best hobby for your family, because increasing numbers of women, children, and families are enjoying it together.