

HAUNSTVILLE Juniper's Witchy Landscaping



Featuring:
Haunted Forests
Spooky Caves
Ghostly Swamps
Twisted Walkways
Open Graves



Guaranteed Completion by Halloween

Welcome to my Village Landscaping course. I have two reliable branch managers who assist me with the landscaping. Witch Juniper operates the Hauntsville office and Hamesh McIntosh operates the Dickens Christmas division. Basically, all the techniques I'll be modeling in this article work for all my villages and have been honed over 20 plus years of village building. At the forefront of this process are the core values of Speed and Cost. What I will show here can be done quite quickly (once you master the techniques) and cheaply. In order to finish a village it will take at least a couple of weeks of long days and steady work.

Tools and Materials



The cutting, shaping and etching tools I prefer and made by the Hot Wire Tool Company. These tools come with a power supply that has a variable temperature control which makes detail work easier. For very fine work I dial the temperature down to about 30%. This allows me to cut fine lines without melting the Styrofoam. For doing general shaping such as mountains, or large rock walls and rock borders I'll raise the temperature to about 80%. The tool shown above with the hooped wire is used to carve the slopes of mountains, fields for farming and anywhere else I want irregular cuts. I can bend and shape the wire to suit my needs as you will see later. The short stubby tool in the center is used for etching cracks between large boulders, making borders for sidewalks and pathways and cutting holes in Styrofoam bases to pass wires through. The final tool is a 6 inch, fine line drawing tool. I can even use it to write in script. This is used to draw the individual stones in pathways, or to etch stones for a patio or deck and to make individual bricks and stones in walls. I get a supply of CHEAP paint brushes that are used not only for painting, but applying turf in tight places and brushing in the silicone that is used to make my water. Speaking of water, I've tried just about everything and have finally settled for G.E. Tub and Tile Clear Silicone. The brand is important. Some brands of silicone will dissolve Styrofoam and destroy my rivers and waterways so I stick to G.E. Usually 1 tube will do all the water in my village so I get all the foam cut and shaped for the entire village and then create all my water at the same time. The silicone can be a bit messy to work with and I have not had good luck storing a partly used tube over night as it hardens quickly. Finally, I

use the floral pins shown to hold everything in place. I can easily use more than 100 pins in a single display.



The materials used for my landscaping are shown above. Starting on the left is the gravel, and both the fine and coarse turf. These products come from a company called Woodland Scenics and were created for making model railroad scenery. You can get them at many hobby stores and of course model railroad stores as well. I always get them in the shaker bottles and the more you get the cheaper they are. I order online from the company so I can get the various colors and types I need. I always use “coarse” ballast for my gravel. Do not use the fine ballast, it is like dust and becomes a real mess unless glued in place. I use both brown and black ballast. This material makes wonderful country roads and when I take the display down I just sweep up the gravel for use the following year. I have a Haywagon with a white base. The white base looks awful in a fall display but if I use the coarse ballast I can cover the entire wagon base so it looks like it is on a dirt road. I use a fine paint brush to push the ballast between horse’s feet and the wagon wheels.



In the image above I've spread the gravel around the horse's feet and the front wheel of the wagon to give you an idea how it will look. The gravel completely obscures the white base. I keep the roadway between hedges or rock walls to confine the gravel so it doesn't get into areas I don't want it.

The second bottle shown on the left is the fine turf that I use as grass or ground cover. I prefer the color "Burnt Grass". They have a Summer Green turf but I think it is far too bright for a fall display. One bottle will last several years with ease. There is also a "coarse" turf that is more clumpy than smooth. I use this in areas where I want a wilder look such as under growth in a forest or on a hill side. I also use a variety of craft paints for just about everything such as riverbanks, rocks on a pathway, bricks, small sets of stairs and anywhere I want to hide the white or pink/purple color of the styrofoam.

I want to discuss spray paints separately and to do so with a word of caution. I use spray paints to cover most of the Styrofoam in the display. It is the fastest method to apply coverage. However, you cannot use just any spray paint to cover the foam. **THE SPRAY PAINT MUST BE WATER BASED!** If your paint is not water based it will dissolve the foam as fast as you apply it. The best of the water based paints is made by Design Master. They have a wide range of colors although they are a bit pricey as they run between \$11.99 and \$18.99 per 12 ounce can (the higher prices are for the metallic paints that I never use). The colors I commonly use are at the lower end of the price range. If I need some odd colors or just small amounts of spray paint then I use TESTORS model paints. These are the paints commonly used for model cars and airplanes. Testors paint comes in 3 ounce cans. I will generally use one full can of Design Masters Walnut, Brown or Black paint for a display and part of a can of green paint. This year I will be using 1 can of Testors paint as well. You do NOT need to use the primer and be sure to hold the can about 8-12 inches away from the foam when applying the paint.

LET'S START LANDSCAPING



The image above shows what will be the base for the Kettle Witch house display. The background mountains have been carved using the Hot Knife as have the two extra sections to add depth. A hole has been cut to accommodate the base of the waterfall and I've used a Sharpie Pen to draw a circle showing the placement of the actual Kettle House along with a drawing to show the path the runoff river from the falls will take to reach the next level of the display.



The above image shows the background mountains that have been sprayed gray using the Testors paint (Design Masters does not make a gray). If you look carefully you can see that I added a light misting of black spray paint to darken the mountains as the falls is a bit darker than the gray paint.



I didn't want the entire area of the Kettle House to be completely flat. Therefore I used the hot knife to cut and sculpt a small piece of foam to fit

between the house and the falls. Little raised areas like this elevated some of the accessories and make them easier to see.



In the image above I've brought out my Hot Wire sculpting tool. I have bent the cutting wire to match the width of the river. This will allow me to cut a riverbed into the foam base with one stroke. I shape and size the wire before I add the turf (grass) so I do not have to worry about the lines being covered by the turf.

ADDING THE TURF

In the image below I have sprayed part of the area with Design Master green paint where I need the turf to adhere. The area inside the circle is where the house will stand so it does not need grass. The river will be cut out and likewise does not need to have grass. The area on the right side will need grass but I'll do that area after the left side is dry.



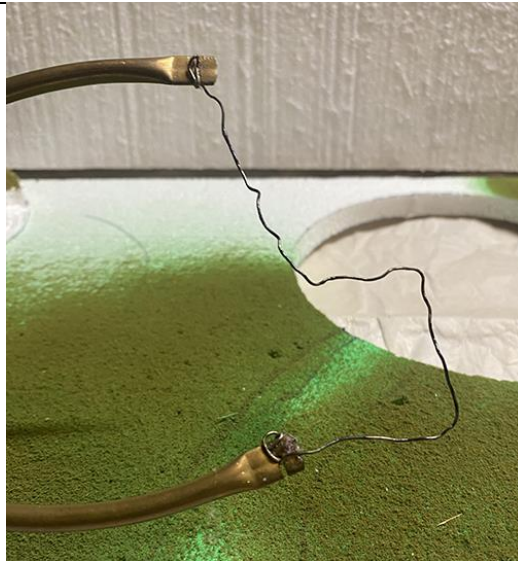
Now before applying the turf I have placed a piece of newspaper under the styrofoam. This is done so I can recover the extra turf to use again. Immediately after spraying the foam I take the shaker bottle of turf, with the cap removed, and just pour the turf over the painted area. Shown below is the base covered with plenty of turf.



As soon as the turf is poured over the paint I lift the Styrofoam and tap the edge of the foam on the newspaper. This shakes off the excess turf which then falls onto the newspaper. After setting the Styrofoam to the side I can pick up the newspaper, fold it in half and use to pour the excess turf back into the shaker bottle.



In the image below I have applied the turf to the right side and now I'm ready to carve the riverbed with the hot wire. Just enough of my river drawing is visible so I can see where to make the cut.



Below you can see the carved river bed. The bent wire has left the river bed with a rippled texture. This will add detail to the appearance of the river when the water is applied.



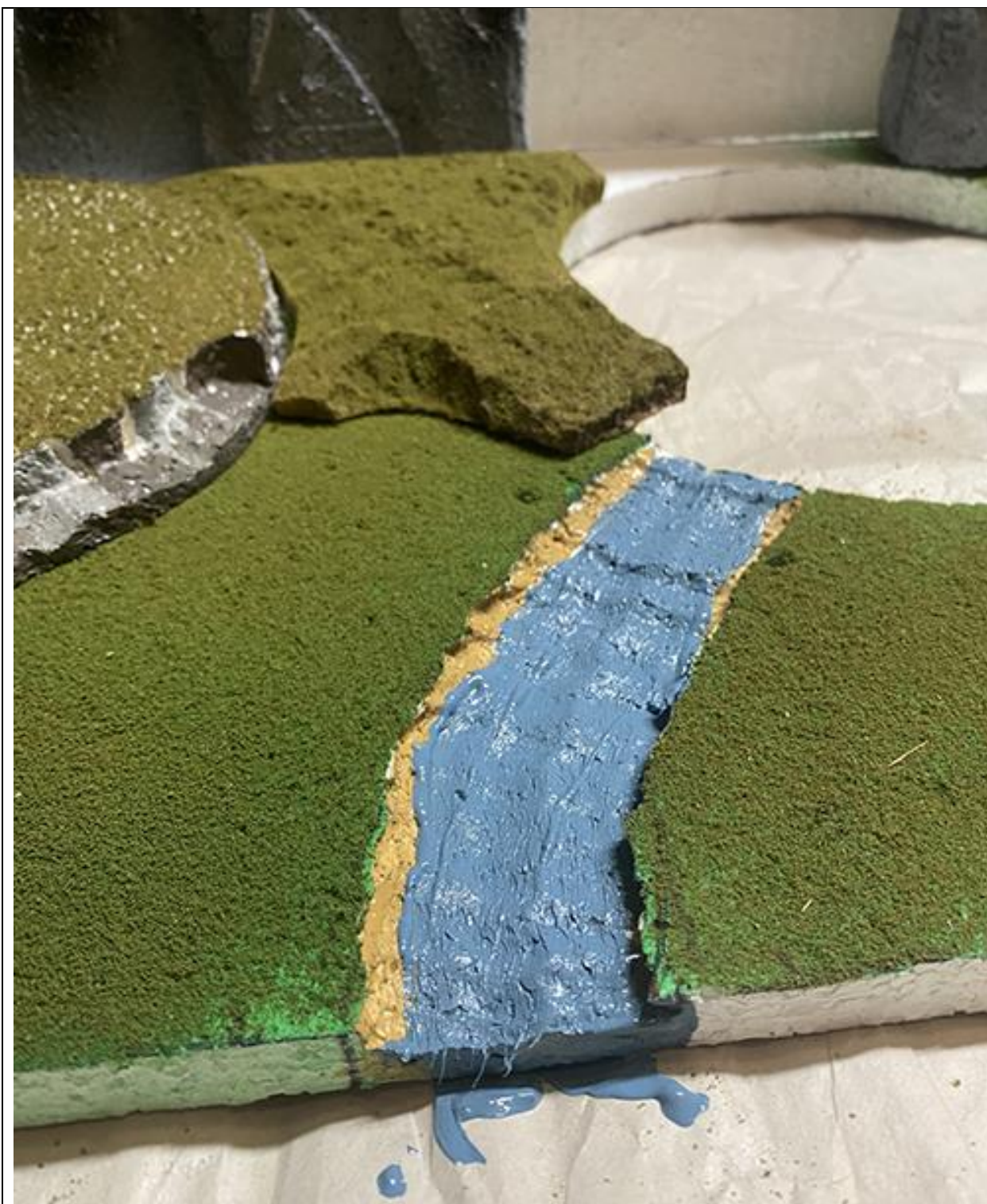
Below you can see the small piece of foam that will be positioned between the house and the falls. You can see how using the hot knife has shaped the edges shown on the top and right allowing the piece to blend into the base without square edges. I stick a floral pin in the back of the foam to act as a handle when applying the spray paint and the turf.



Shown below is the circular base I've added for the Kettle House and the little piece of foam between the house and the hole for the waterfall. I show this to call attention of the painted and turf covered pieces. Notice the base for the house is darker than the main base. I used green spray paint as the "glue" for the main base and brown paint for the "glue" under the circular piece for the house. This allows for more options as you assemble the look you want for the display. I've also made a little bridge to allow villagers access to the house from across the river. I realized the need for the bridge as I was putting the pieces together so I used some broken twigs from my yard and a bit of hot glue to hold the bridge together. Looks like a perfect bridge for a witch!



Next I painted the river base. A light tan was used to paint a bank for the river and then a light blue to paint the riverbed. I thought about making the river sort of muddy but since the display will be viewed in a semi dark room and this scene will be in the back of the display I was afraid it would be too dark to be easily seen. You can also see the texture visible in the river bed.

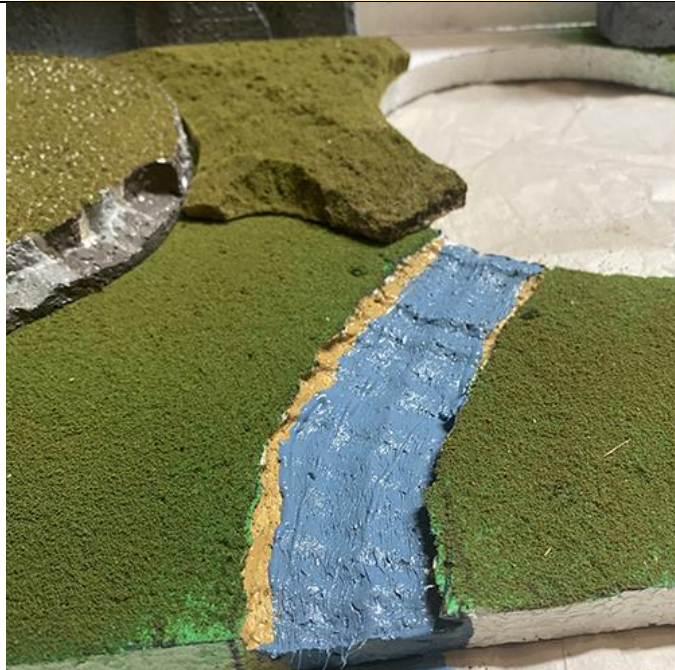


As I mentioned in the previous article, I like different levels for the various parts of the display. Thus I have created a circular base to sit the kettle house upon. I used the short stubby Hot Wire tool to create etchings for a rocky edge to the house base. Once the rocks were carved they were painted with two colors of

craft paint. The white foam between the “rocks” will look like mortar to hold them together.



When I carved the rocks for the Kettle House base I also carved a step into the base. This way the witches do not have to jump to get to the level of their house. It just adds another bit of detail to the overall scene.



Now the base for the kettle house scene is finished other than for the water.



You may notice some unpainted areas on the left. These will not be visible in the final scene when the house is in place and thus there was no reason to paint and add turf to these areas. When I get the house and the stone pathway that will come from the right, meet the bridge and then lead to the house steps the scene will be completed. This scene has what I refer to as hard edges. I will soften these edges with moss (from Michaels) and add trees (lots of trees) and lights. When finished the witch that lives here will have a proper home.

Juniper's Landscaping crew has done a pretty good job so far. In the next edition we will add some water to the river and create a swamp and waterfall.

See you next time.

Witch Juniper's Landscape Crew

