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# Modelling Fern Trees In 1:48 Scale

by Mick Bennie

**T**his tutorial uses techniques that have been used before, with a few tweaks of my own. Apologies to Dan Pickard, Rod Hutchison and other great modellers from whom some of these ideas and techniques have been 'borrowed'.

I start with cheap plastic N scale coconut palm trees purchased over the internet, primarily from eBay. Look for tree trunks which have trunks which are one width from top to bottom. Some palms have bottle shaped trunks.



The tree ferns we are modelling have trunks that are mostly uniform thickness from top to bottom. I was going to say straight, but clearly that is not true. Many grow up with curved or even bent trunks, to reach the sunlight or through falling and regrowth.

The photo on the left shows the variety of sizes and straight and curved trunks. In this domestic setting most of the withered fronds have been removed. I model tree ferns in gullies and forest settings where the withered



fronds hang below the green foliage, as below.

There are numerous sources for model tree ferns on the internet. I mainly use eBay. The seller I used exclusively for a few years currently has no listings, however a quick search in the Toys and Hobbies category with the key words 'coconut palm trees' brought up numerous results which are suitable. I buy 'N' scale trees, as these are smaller and more suitable in 'O' scale. Look for this type;-



Note the moulded coconuts just below the fronds and the spike at the bottom. I remove the fronds and fix them at the bottom, then cut the stems below the coconuts and mount the trunks upside down; spike at the top.

I usually buy two or three varieties and sizes of trees and mix the fronds to simulate different ages of growth.

These are two varieties on my work bench. The first step is to remove all of the fronds and lay them out according to size. The largest and longest fronds will go on first and they will get progressively shorter until the last, smallest ones at the top, representing the newest growth. These fronds have a very plastic sheen to them. This can be reduced by spraying them with dullcote or painting them. I use three different cans of spray paint from the local hardware store. The colours are three different greens in the ColourBond range of metal coatings. They are all low sheen.



Once the fronds have been removed and the trunks shortened, I spray the trunks with spray adhesive and roll them in tea leaves. This gives them the rough appearance of native tree ferns. The dark colour suggests that they have survived a fire in the past.

This matted mess is coconut

fibre. I get mine from hanging baskets which are past their prime and have been repotted. You could also get it in new condition from your local garden nursery. I take several lengths and cut them to a similar size to the longest green frond and glue them under the foliage at the top of the fern. Note the trunks lying to the side. I poke them into the end of a piece of corrugated cardboard to dry.



The final assembly complete. The fronds have been fitted to the spike, largest and darkest first; smallest and lightest last. The coconut fibre has been glued to the top of the trunk. Some trimming needs to be done before these are placed in scene. Each will be placed so that the top of each trunk is vertical, as you would find in nature. The fronds on these ferns have not been painted but can be dull coated before being placed. ....

