

## Profile of Garden Engineers

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Glen Sadduck's fascination with trains started in his childhood. He did not find time to explore his interest, however, until after he became an empty nester.

"I had kids and a career," Shadduck said. "By the time I reached 55, I still hadn't

Seniors make up the typical demographic for garden railway engineers, but they are not the only ones attracted to the hobby. I built the railway I wanted. Then I visited a friend who had a railroad set up in his garden, and I was intrigued."

Shadduck became so interested that he designed and built his own garden railway, complete with ponds, streams, water plants and fish. He also is the president of the Puget Sound Garden Railway Society in Washington.

Sadduck exemplifies the typical garden railroad engineer, said Jeff Stimson, information support manager with Marklin Inc. in Waukesha, Wis. "Many of the hobbyists are empty nesters who have put their kids through college and have more disposable income and free time," he said. "It's usually someone who liked trains, but that interest stayed dormant for many years until they came back to it."

Seniors are attracted to garden railways for two main reasons, Sadduck said. First, garden railway trains are larger, making them easier for older fingers to work on and older eyes to see, he said. Second, "it's a hobby that's predominately done by couples," he said, adding that it proved true in his case.

"We find that working outside together is a pleasant thing to do," Sadduck said about gardening with his wife. "It combines trains with gardening, so it kills two birds with one stone."

Jonathan Meador, vice president of development for Silvergate Distributors Inc. in San Diego, Calif., said garden railroading often is a couple's hobby more so than other hobbies. "In indoor model railroading, it's the husband by himself in the basement," he said. "Outside it's a chance to combine it with gardening, so there's something for both to do."

While seniors make up the typical demographic for the hobby, Meador said they are not the only ones attracted to it. "It's a more balanced hobby that appeals to women, men and families," he said. "Having kids or grandkids also is a great excuse."