

# Nutshell News

for creators and collectors of scale miniatures

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BONUS  
SHOW  
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## THE FABULOUS PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW

A New How-to Series by Susanne Russo

England's "Dragon Lady"

ARTISANS SHOWCASE:  
FRENCH COUNTRY

"Mountain Lodge Retreat"  
by Brenda O'Brien



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# THE PHILADELPHIA STORY

*Our sprouts steal the show*





Vanessa Peirce and Sandra Trump carried out the "Presenting the Future" portion of the show theme with their stunning "Valhalla's Dining Pavilion in the Year 2097."

"I think this replica of the Cloisters (shown opposite) is the best entry we've ever had!" Bruce says. With the exception of the live plantings, everything in this scene was scratch-built by its creators, artists Midge Ingersoll and Evelyn Seaton, who titled it "Arches Through Time." The effect of stone, and even the lights in the distant skyscraper windows, are painted. The Cloisters won both a blue ribbon in its category and a Best of the Blue ribbon winners in its class. This was the first time these artists had entered the miniatures category.

SOMETHING VERY SMALL but very special blooms in Philadelphia every spring and eager crowds fill the Civic Center to see it. Visitors to the city's nationally famous flower show each March discover to their delight a scale model world of natural beauty. Since 1976, the Philadelphia Flower Show has had a miniatures settings class, a category now being adopted in home and flower shows across the country, and one that has proven very successful in introducing miniatures to an enthusiastic general public.

"It began simply as a demonstration, with five entries," explains Bruce Barnstead, who is co-chairman of the miniatures class. "Then, when we discovered how popular the miniatures were, we made it a competitive category. Now we average 10 entries, with four or five 'core entries,' people who enter every year," he continues. "About 60% of the entrants are

miniaturists, the rest only do miniatures for this show," Bruce says. "If you were in the show last year, you have first choice to be in this year. The second spots go to other prior year entrants, and finally, usually about two spots a year to newcomers."

The overall theme for this year's show was "Preserving the Past and Presenting the Future," and in the miniatures categories, entries interpreted that with the theme "Architectural Details." The rules and the judging are strict. Each entry must relate to the year's chosen theme, of course, and must contain a minimum of three live and rooted plants. All plants must be horticulturally correct. ("You can't use a juniper, for instance, and then hang apples on it!") In addition to the required rooted plants, the scene may use cuttings and unaltered dried materials. "Artificial materials could be used too," Bruce grants, "but it would be to the (Text continues on page 45.)





*"On the Edge in Santa Fe" is a replica of an actual home which its designer Carol McCluskie saw on the cover of Garden Design magazine. Carol and her partners, Kathleen and Angelina Gibney, and Joan Shinkle, who worked with the plants, copied the landscaping exactly as it was pictured, even to using white marble chips. The house is made of adobe ("We made the bricks ourselves!") and has an authentic tarpaper roof. The raised runnels to carry the water supply are made from colored wood and the realistic "fountains" are fiber optics lit from beneath.*

Nance Palladino calls herself "a frustrated architect," but it was her little son beginning music lessons that inspired her to create "Miss Penelope Potter's School of Music." Nance first made a posterboard model of the four-room house, then built it from foamcore board. Her sister, Jacqueline Vannozzi ("I dragged her into miniatures") worked side by side with Nance to construct the scene.

"I wanted you to be able to see inside each of the rooms," Nance says, "because Miss Potter is the kind of lady who cares enough to invite you into all of her home."







"The Station" was a blue ribbon winner for Marion Borneman. "It's really a combination of the Berks station and the Boyertown station," she says. "The real Boyertown station was moved and changed to a private home. But a friend who was a model railroader was working on a replica of it before he died. I was given his drawings." Her model, like all the old Pennsylvania stations, is built between the tracks. The color scheme, too, is authentic. Marion's son Jon, who is an art major, did most of the painting. Her husband, Henry, helped with the lighting and the setup. "I named it Berks Station," Marion says, "because this is what I wish they had done with the real one!"

Another crowd pleaser, shown in the lower photo, was "Island Restorations, Inc." by Minis of Princeton, Anne Adriance and Nancy O'Connor.





It takes a moment to catch all the subtleties in this row house scene by Elizabeth Barrows and her son Walter. Its title, "Yesterday - Today - and Tomorrow," signifies not only the show theme, but is also the nickname of one of the scene's live plants (*Brunfelsia pauciflora* Macrantha). Yesterday is portrayed by the older couple living in the left side of the house, with Today and Tomorrow, the younger generations, on the right. The live Chinese elm tree is 16 years old and was "born" in California the year Elizabeth's father died. "I always wanted to use it in a scene in memory of him," she says.

Jane and Ben McCormick called their entry "Monterey." The rooms are based on those in Casa Solbranes, a historic house in Monterey, California, built in the 1840s "This house inspired one of the Thorne rooms," Jane says, "and that in turn inspired me." The house's helpful curator sent Jane measurements and photographs to work from. Jane carved the brick floors from brick patterned linoleum ("a Pat Thomas trick") and color-copied a photo of the actual Spanish tile baseboards, then applied it to wood strips. Jane made almost all the furnishings as well, except for the rug, Bill Clinger's Windsor chairs, and the George Schlosser print.

*M. Jane and  
Becky Smyth  
preserved the  
past beautiful-  
ly in their  
replica of  
"Washington's  
Headquarters  
at Valley  
Forge."*



entry's detriment." Most entries contain far more than the required number of live plants.

On set-up day, two "passers" walk slowly through the exhibits, carefully examining each one. One passer checks the entries horticulturally to be certain they conform to the rules. The second passer makes sure that everything is visually in scale. If anything is amiss, the entrants are given a chance to remedy it before the judging begins later in the day.

The rules also prohibit incorporating moving items in the miniature exhibits. "I tell people, 'It's easy to just plug something

in. Use your imagination!'" Bruce says. "For example, one person wanted to use a circulating water pump to create rain outside a window. When we refused it, he used his ingenuity instead. He threaded about 100 very fine threads and then dropped glue on them, which beaded. When the lights hit the glue 'raindrops,' it was much more effective than real water would have been."

This year's flower show will be the last to be held in the Civic Center. In 1995, it will move to Philadelphia's new Convention Center, where the some of its biggest stars will still be very small indeed. ■