

Introduction

I love and appreciate the beauty of a great looking war gaming table. Beautiful terrain is the perfect backdrop for an epic clash of painted armies. It affords us an opportunity to escape reality and makes us feel as if we are standing on the battlefield with our army. Over the last few years, I have had the good fortune to attend a number of great events and play some games with some wonderful hobbyists. Along the way, I have picked up a few tips and developed some of my own for making great looking terrain for your table. In this series, I will share my thoughts and provide instruction on building the basic terrain pieces needed for playing Kings of War. Throughout the series, we will build a great looking table piece by piece. With a little time and effort, anyone can have a great looking gaming table.



Forests

In this first installment, I am going to tackle one of the most useful pieces of terrain you can make for your war gaming table, a forest. They are integral to Kings of War as they provide both Difficult Terrain and Line of Sight blocking. My goal for every piece of terrain is to make it as realistic as possible without compromising its' playability. This is never truer than with Forests. It is a balancing act between making something beautiful and something functional and durable. For starters, the trees need to be removable for the practicality of moving ranked units through the forest. We also need an easy way to mark the edge of the forest so we know whether a unit is in the forest or not. Finally, we need it to look like a dense forest and not simply three trees on a piece of green felt. I have tried a number of different methods including putting pegs into the bottom of the trees, which push fit into a forest base. This is great if you have very tall, top heavy trees like Palm Trees. The trees are very stable and yet are still removable. However, it is an awful lot of work and most of the time it is overkill.



I have also gone the route of basing all the trees individually and placing them on a forest base of textured MDF. This type of forest is easy to game with and allows the flexibility to add more forests by simply reducing the

number of trees on each base. However, the trees do not really group well together or blend in with the forest base. The result is not the cohesive, dense looking forest I was shooting for.



After a number of trial and errors, I have settled on a forest mounted on 1/4" MDF that is organically "sliced" into 4 sections. As the units move through the forest, "slices" can be removed leaving behind a MDF template for the footprint of the forest. The picture below shows what the final forest looks like.



Step One – Materials

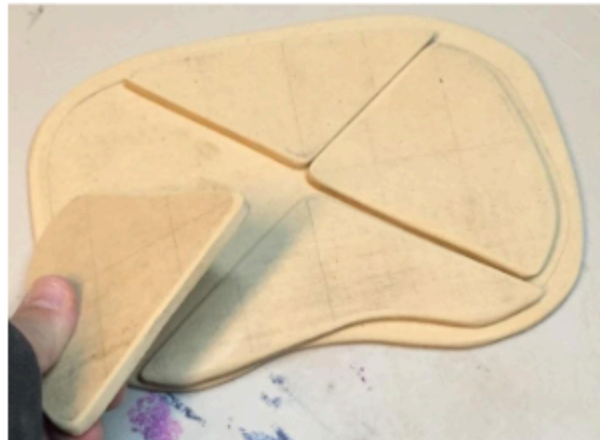
Here is a list of materials that I used to make my forest. The list assumes you already have common supplies like glue and brushes. Feel free to substitute to whatever brands you prefer or materials you already have on hand.

- [1/4" Medium Density Fiberboard](#) - I prefer to buy this as a 2' x 4' sheet from a big box DIY store
- Sand - My preference is builder sand as it is coarser and will include small pebbles
- [Earth Brown Camouflage Spray Paint](#)
- [Raw Umber](#) Paint - Can use in lieu of the Spray Paint
- [Raw Sienna](#) Paint
- [Dark Grey](#) and [Grey](#) Craft Paint
- Bachmann Scenescapes 4"-6" (O Scale) [Spruce](#) and [Cedar](#) trees
- [Farm Pasture Texture Blend](#)
- [2mm Late Summer Static Grass](#)
- [Super Turf](#) – Dark and Medium Green

- [Grass Tufts](#)
- [Summer Flowers](#)

Step Two – The Base

I specifically chose $\frac{1}{4}$ " MDF for the base as I have found that it is thick enough that it will not warp when slathered in glue and paint. Start by drawing out your top piece (the part attached to the trees) on paper. Play around with the size and shape until you are happy with the result. Next, cut out your pattern and trace it onto the MDF. Cut it out the top piece with a jigsaw (do not cut it into multiple pieces yet). Create the bottom base by tracing the top piece onto the MDF and then add a uniform boarder all the way around. Cut out the bottom base and split the top into 4 pieces with a jigsaw. Sand and bevel the edges with a palm sander using 220 grit sandpaper. One alternation you could make to the project is to use a piece of felt under the top piece to mark the footprint of the forest.



Step Three – Mount the Trees

I chose to use 4" to 6" spruce and cedar trees from Bachmann Trains. You can however use any store bought tree you would like or you could build your own. Just keep in mind you generally want to use trees that are O Scale (1:48) in size as they fit in best with 28mm models. You also want trees in varying heights and species to add visual interest to your forest. Start by gluing the trees to their plastic bases and then glue the plastic base down to the MDF base with CA glue. Take a little extra time here to make sure that you fill out the base. Your goal is to make a forest that you cannot see through. I find that the trees look best when grouped in odd numbers. Also, make sure to handle the trees by their trunks to avoid rubbing off too much of the flock.



Step Four – Sand and Rocks

Start by adding extra detail to the base by gluing down resin rock castings or pieces of actual rocks with CA glue. This step, while not necessary, adds a little spice to the base by breaking up the flat surfaces. Continue by covering the base with PVA glue followed by sand. Keep in mind on the bottom base you only want sand on the area that sticks out past the top piece or you run the risk that your forest “slices” will not sit flat.



Step Five – Paint

Since we are going to completely cover the base with flocking material, do not waste too much time on the paint job. Spray paint the entire base with Rustoleum Earth Brown Camouflage paint. You could also substitute the spray paint for a Raw Umber (Dark Brown) brush on paint. Next lightly dry brush across the surface of the sand with Raw Sienna to highlight the texture of the sand. Finally pick out any rock formations with Dark Gray paint followed by a dry brush of Gray paint.



Step Six – Texture

The key to this step is multiple layers of texture. For this step I only flocked the top piece which is attached to the trees. Start by covering the entire surface with full strength PVA glue. Then cover the glue with a layer of Farm Pasture Texture Blend. This is a blend of several shades of flocks and textures, which make the perfect forest floor. Feel free to experiment and use your own blend of flock on this step. After the glue has dried coat the edge of the surface with watered down PVA glue and apply 2mm Late Summer Static Grass. The goal of this step is to make the grass look like it naturally stops at the tree line rather than a perfect circle around the trees. Try to avoid having a uniform ring of grass around the trees by having the grass penetrate deeper into the woods in a few places.



Once the glue is dry it is time to add bushes by using dark and medium green Super Turf. You could also use lichen in lieu of Super Turf. Take a pinch of Super Turf and soak it with a mixture of 50% water and 50% PVA glue. Form the wet Super Turf into a ball and apply it onto a patch of PVA glue applied to the surface. Continue to apply the Super Turf building up the bushes under the trees until you are happy with the results. After the glue is dry add some grass tufts and flowers to the base with a drop of CA Glue. Finally, after everything is completely dry hit the whole piece with matte varnish to lock everything in and dull down any shine left from the PVA glue.



