

Piko's G-Track System

Review and Photos by David Otte

Piko Large Scale

Curve Track R7

1565 mm (61.6 inches) Radius

#35217, MSRP: \$13.49

Manual Switch Left R7 22.5 degrees

#35226, MSRP: \$105.99

Manual Switch Right R7 22.5 degrees

#35227, MSRP: \$105.99

Piko America, LLC

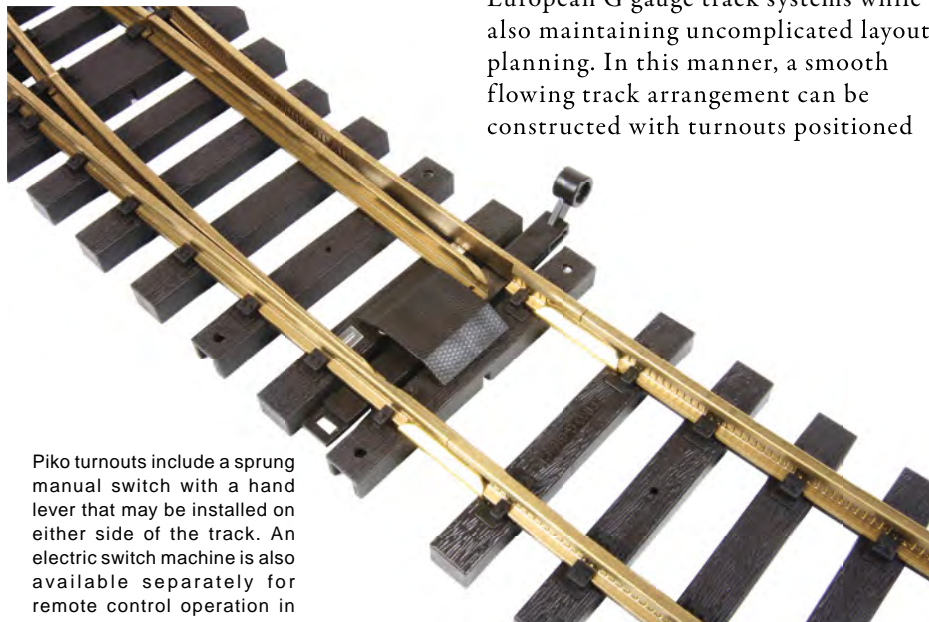
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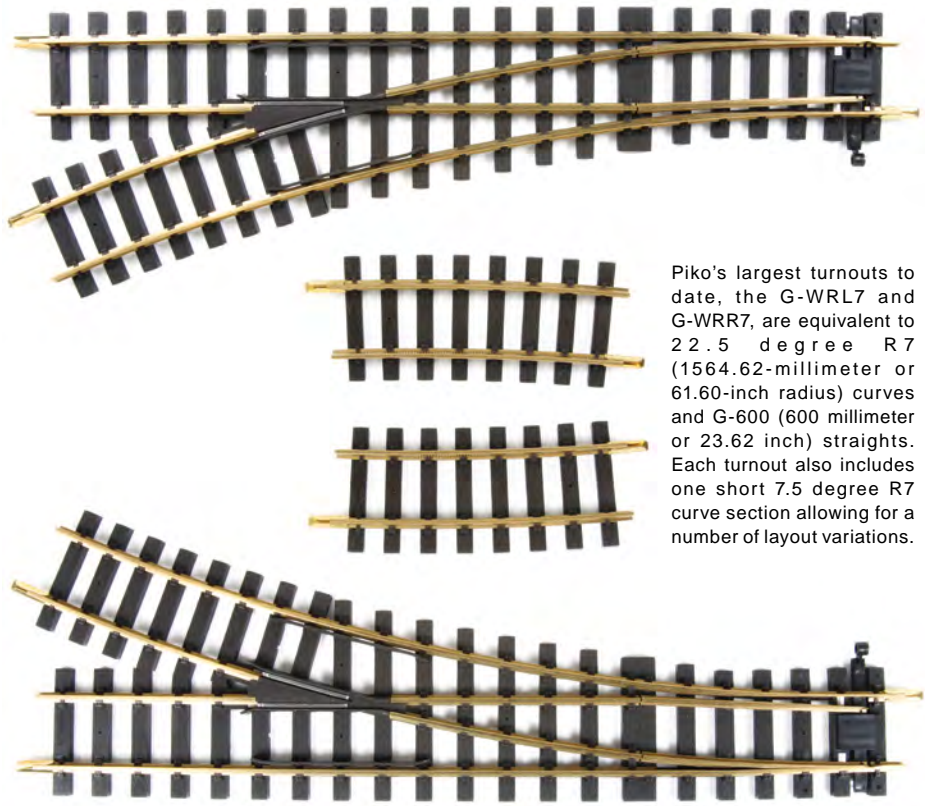
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PIKO has made some noteworthy contributions to its Large Scale roster in the relatively short time span that it has been producing G gauge locomotives and rolling stock. However, many modelers may not be familiar with the Germany-based company's extensive line of sectional track and accessories. The recent arrival at *Model Railroad News* of samples of its latest large radius curves and turnouts motivated me to pick up a copy of the manufacturer's current catalog and check out exactly what Piko has to offer. Whether you are contemplating building your first indoor/outdoor



Piko turnouts include a sprung manual switch with a hand lever that may be installed on either side of the track. An electric switch machine is also available separately for remote control operation in either analog or digital mode.



Piko's largest turnouts to date, the G-WRL7 and G-WRR7, are equivalent to 22.5 degree R7 (1564.62-millimeter or 61.60-inch radius) curves and G-600 (600 millimeter or 23.62 inch) straights. Each turnout also includes one short 7.5 degree R7 curve section allowing for a number of layout variations.

Large Scale pike or are simply looking to expand an existing garden railway, follow along as I journey through Piko's expansive G-Track System.

Geometry and Realism

For Piko, geometry and realism were essential ingredients in developing its G-Track System. The basis for the design is a 600 x 160-millimeter (23.62 x 6.33-inch) grid, keeping it compatible with existing popular U.S. and European G gauge track systems while also maintaining uncomplicated layout planning. In this manner, a smooth flowing track arrangement can be constructed with turnouts positioned

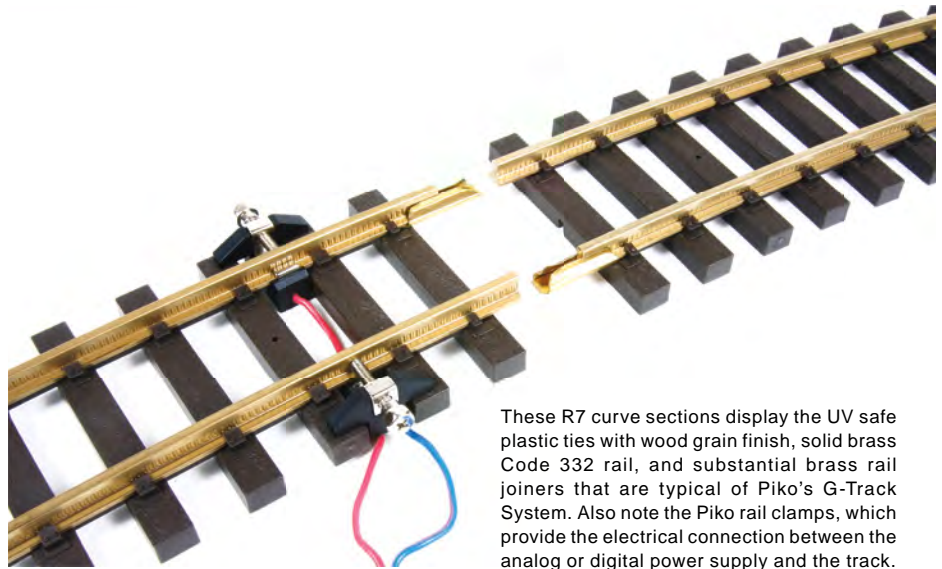
on straights or curves as well as parallel tracks placed at varying distances apart, which maintains not only minimal clearances, but provides the space necessary for ancillary accessories like loading docks and other pertinent railway lineside structures. Sticking with this basic geometry also means there is no need for short custom-cut pieces of track, which often foul up the planning stages of a layout or lead to poor conductivity and misaligned rail joints.

First of all, each track section features solid pure virgin brass rail with an authentic profile, including head, web, and foot like traditional Flat-Bottom-style rail. Furthermore, being Code 332 (0.332 inches high) in size, Piko's rail provides excellent conductivity and minimizes voltage loss, as do the company's large brass rail joiners. The ties have a scale length and spacing more at home on a narrow gauge road, but are substantial enough in width and height to make up for the visual discrepancy when operating standard gauge prototypes. Most importantly though, Piko's ties are injection molded from a UV stabilized high-density Polyethylene that is high impact and weather resistant — definitely a plus for use in the garden. Molded-on details displayed

by each tie include simulated wood grain finish and base plates with rail clamp and screw spike representations. Finally, holes are provided in several ties of each rail section for anchoring the track down semi-permanently with nails or screws, while the end ties of each section also provide for the use of track clips (35285) as warranted with more temporary layouts.

Next, forming the minimum requirements of the base grid concept are the R1 (600 millimeter or 23.62 inches) radius curve and two straight sections, G-320 (320 millimeter or 12.66 inch) and G-280 (280 millimeters or 10.96 inch), which, when joined, form the grid's base length. While these two straights are all that are required for the basic layout, additional lengths are available for more complex arrangements. These include G-160 (160 millimeter or 6.33 inches), G-140 (140 millimeters or 5.48 inches), and G-95 (95 millimeter or 3.79 inches) as well as G-600 and G-1200, which create single and double stretches of the base grid length for use on continuous straight runs. Likewise, additional radius curves that build ever larger concentric circles around R1 at 320 millimeter intervals can be purchased as well: R3 (923.54-millimeter or 36.28-inch radius), R5 (1243.08-millimeter or 48.94-inch radius), and the newest addition (pictured), R7 (1564.62-millimeter or 61.60-inch radius). Both R1 and R3 are 30 degree curves that will require 12 pieces to form a complete circle, while R5 and R7 are 15 degree curves requiring 24 pieces for a complete circle.

Correlating with both the selection of curves and straights are Piko's range of left and right hand turnouts. G-WLR1 and G-WRR1 are equivalent

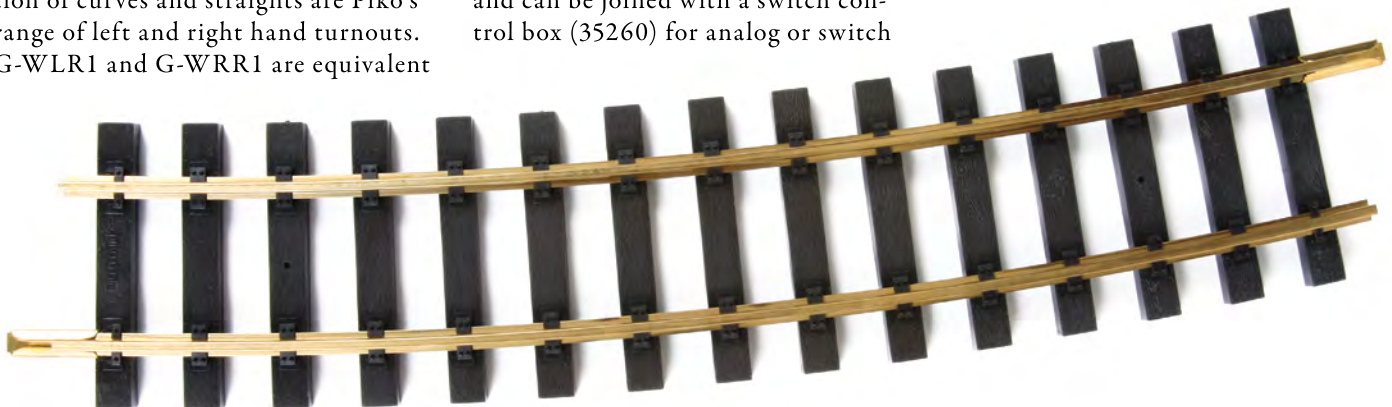


These R7 curve sections display the UV safe plastic ties with wood grain finish, solid brass Code 332 rail, and substantial brass rail joiners that are typical of Piko's G-Track System. Also note the Piko rail clamps, which provide the electrical connection between the analog or digital power supply and the track.

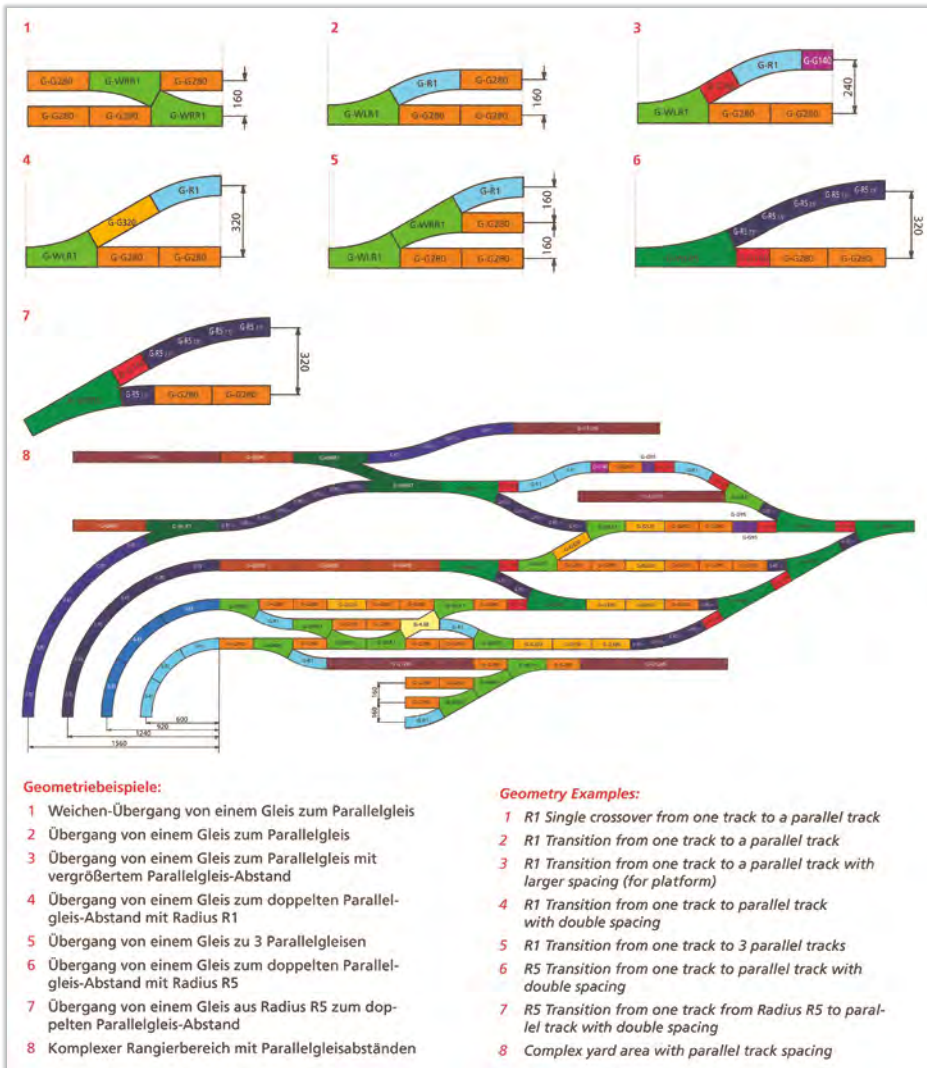
to R1 curves and G-320 straight sections and will form a parallel track at 160 millimeters apart. The switches grow in length and radius from there. G-WLR3 and G-WRR3, G-WLR5 and G-WRR5, and G-WLR7 and G-WRR7, the newest additions (pictured), follow suit and include 7.5 degree curved sections of their respective radius curve equivalents to keep the layout on an even keel. Additional pieces of these small sections of larger radius curves can also be purchased separately for building up varying distances between parallel tracks. Furthermore, Piko offers left and right hand curved turnouts, G-BWL R3-R5 and G-BWR R3-R5, that interact with R3 and R5 radius curves so that two concentric loops can be connected or curved passing sidings can be created. Each of the company's turnouts is sold separately and come as manually operated with sprung switches. A waterproof electric switch machine (35271) is available and can be joined with a switch control box (35260) for analog or switch

decoder (35013) for digital layouts, which allow remote operation of up to four turnouts per device. Last but not least, a lighted switch lantern (35266) can be attached to each electric switch machine for a realistic indication of the setting of the switch points.

Rounding out the G-Track System is an assortment of accessories and specialty track items. Piko utilizes rail clamps (35270) equipped with 16-gauge wire to transmit power to the track and offers insulated rail joiners (35292) for setting up analog power blocks and sidings. A 30 degree crossing, G-K30, has also been incorporated into the design for even more interesting layout possibilities. Need a custom radius curve? No problem. Flex track can be formed from separately sold tie strips, 320 millimeter (35230) and 280 millimeter (35231), and lengths of rail, 3000 millimeter or 118.11 inches (35250) and 1500 millimeter or 59.06 inches (35251); an aftermarket rail



The new R7 curve sections will form a circle with a radius of 1564.62 millimeters or 61.60 inches. The modeler will need to purchase a total of 24 sections for a complete loop (Piko curves are sold in boxes of 12 sections), but the resulting 10.3-foot diameter circle is perfect for those larger scale length freight and passenger cars.



From one track to the next ...the geometry of the G-Track System. This is just some of the many Piko track scenarios as shown in the company's current catalog. Track sections are color coordinated to make it easy for even novice modelers to plan an entire layout on paper first. The possibilities seem endless!

bender is required however. Finally, Piko offers both a range of powerful analog throttles and power supplies as well as its easy to use Digital System (reviewed in the September 2012 issue of *Model Railroad News*) from which the modeler can choose for the operation of their G-Track system empire.

From Carpet Central to Garden Railway Pike

The G-Track System has been my G gauge track of choice since receiving a Piko Christmas Starter Set some years back. The set's included R1 curves were intermixed with my old LGB and Aristocraft sectional track and, over the ensuing years, additional straight sections, R3, R5, and now R7 curves and equivalent turnouts have been added culminating in numerous "Carpet Central" layouts built throughout the basement. While I have yet to procure some backyard real estate for my dream garden pike, I have found the Piko track products to stand up quite well to the repetitive construction and destruction of my temporary indoor floor layouts, including the foot traffic of visiting bystanders and those disapproving family members whose personal space has been taken over by G gauge rail lines. However, when the charter for that outdoor layout is finally in hand, the Piko G-Track System will be my go-to source for rail supplies. 