

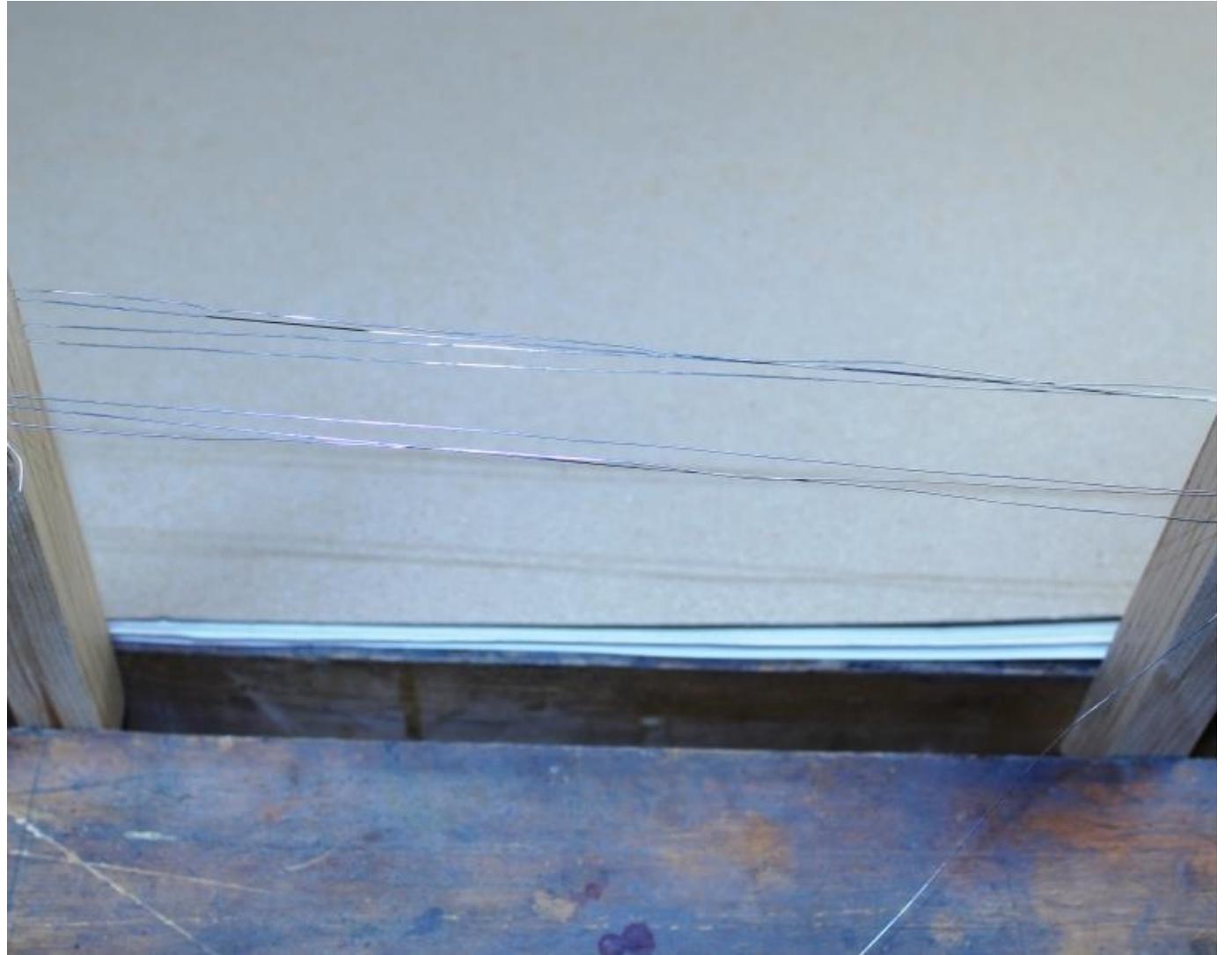
Building Wire Armature Trees in HO Scale

Jerry Lauchle, MMR

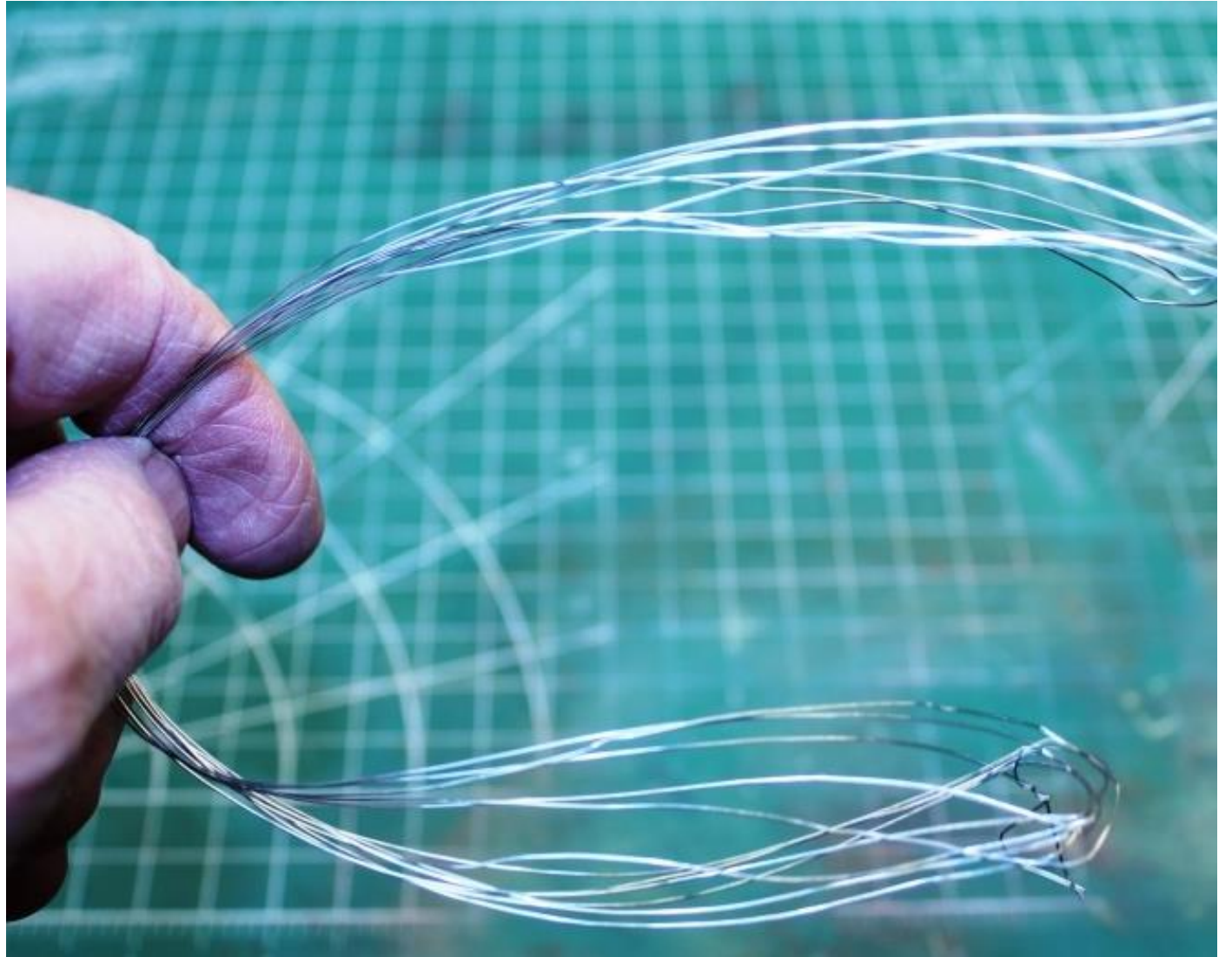
I use 30- and 26-gauge floral wire to make my trees. Some modelers strip the insulation off stranded copper wire to reveal their wire of choice.



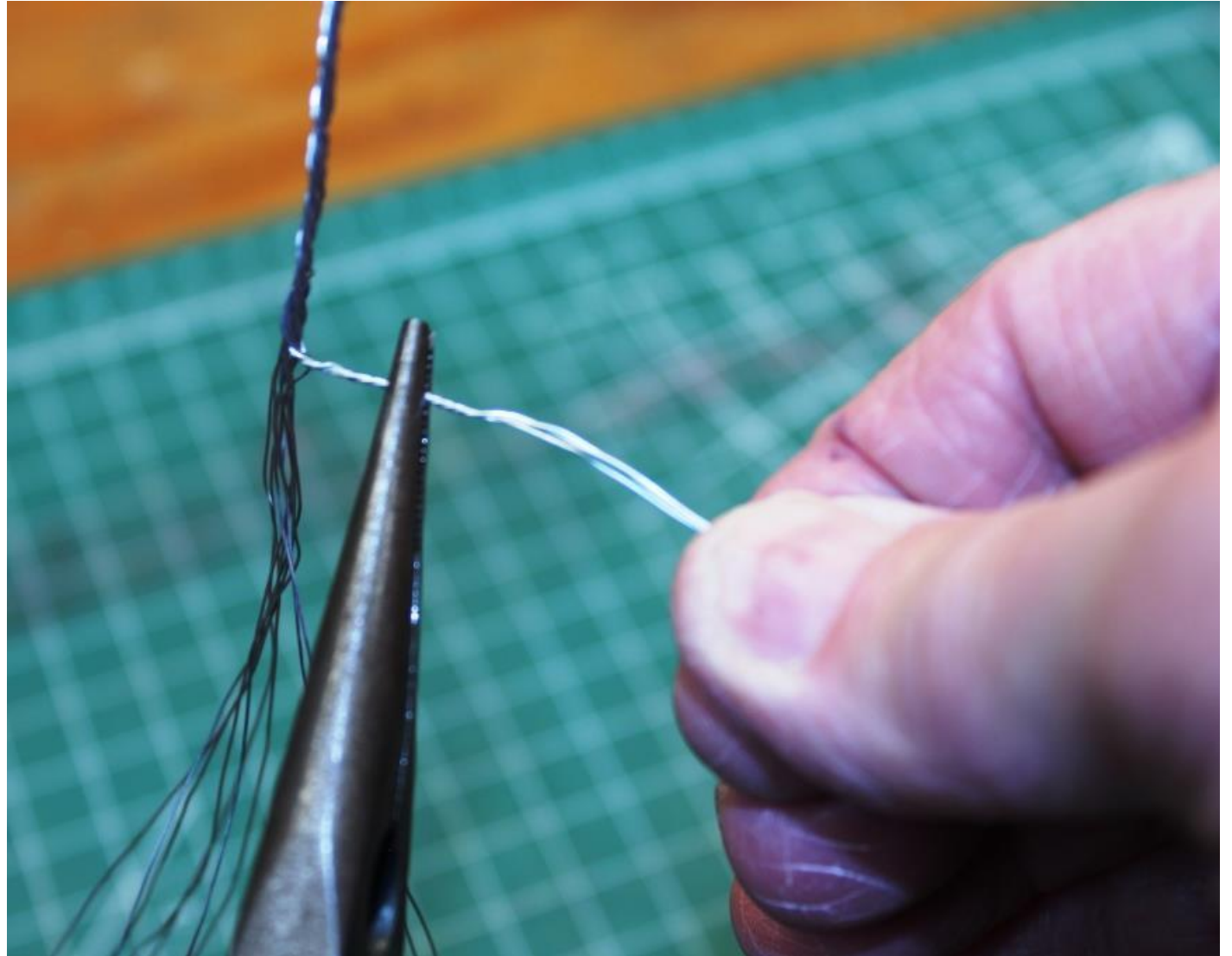
I clamp two pieces of $\frac{3}{4}$ " square wood, or $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter dowels in a vice to wrap the wire around to create the initial bunch of wires to form a tree. Here, I am using 30-gauge floral wire.



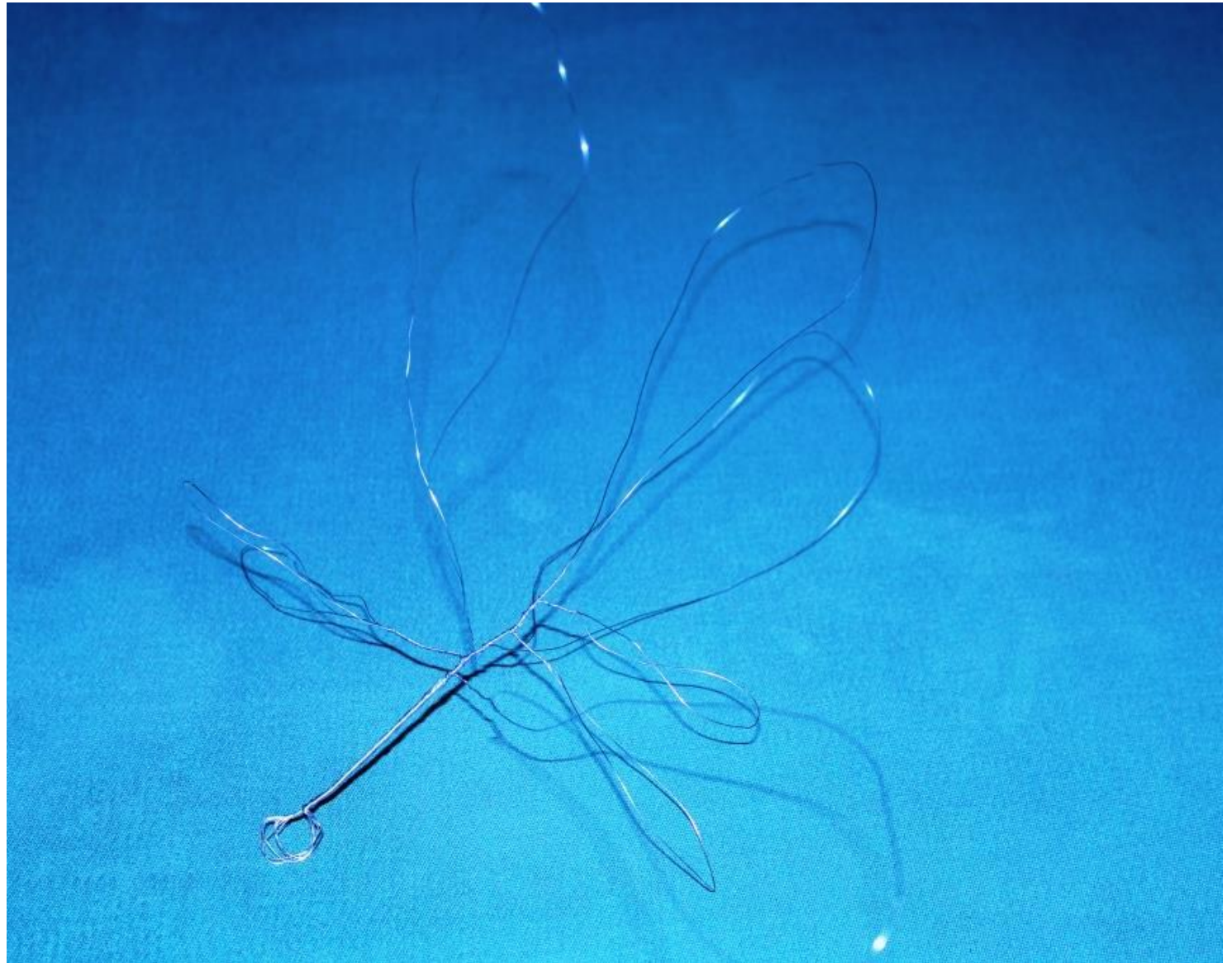
Here is the roughly 4-feet of floral wire after wrapping it around the two sticks in a vice a few times.



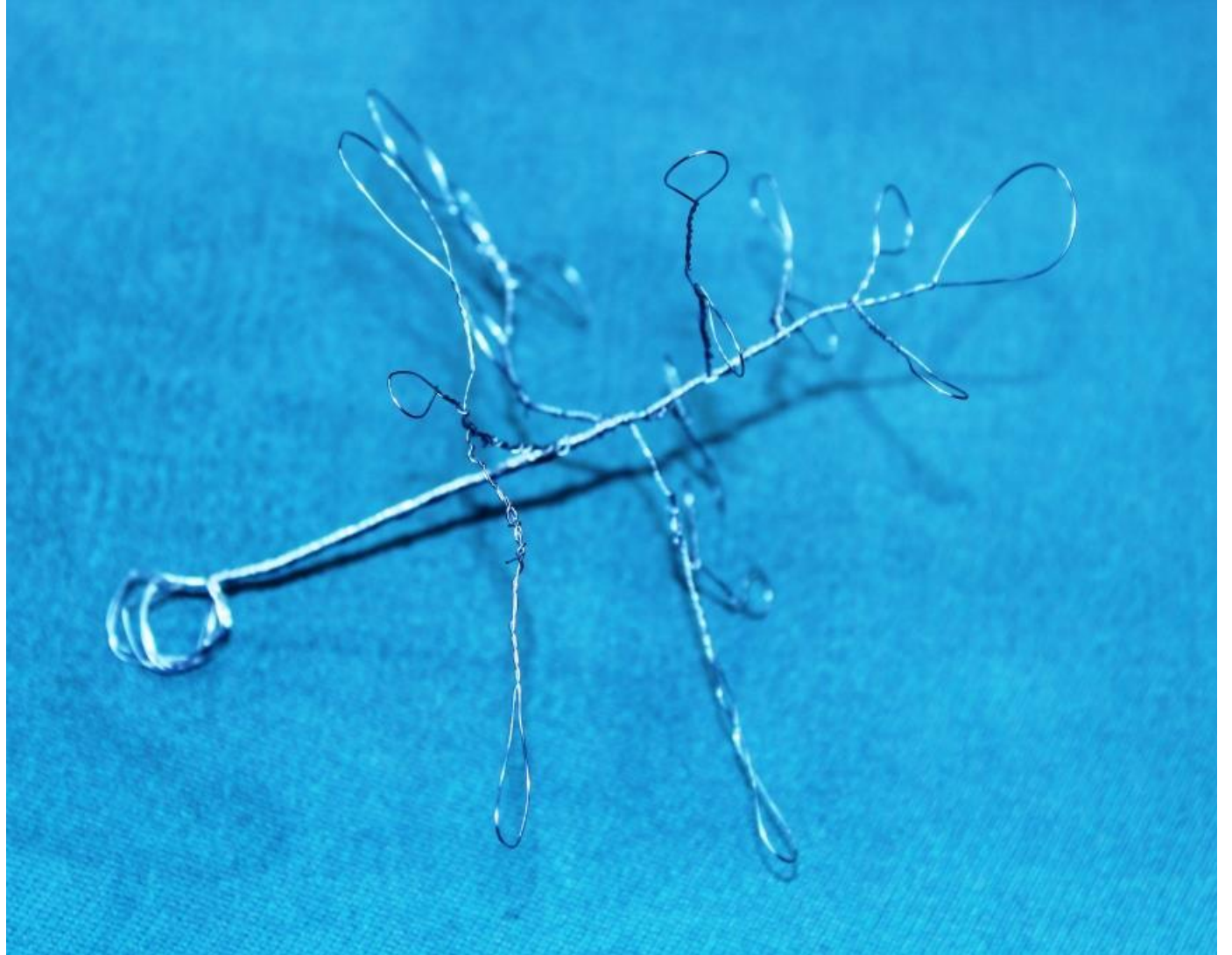
You first grab each end of the bundle with both hands and twist many times to form the lower trunk (not too long though). Then work up and pull two strands with a single loop at their ends. Twist them to form the first lower branch. The loop remains at the end of this branch.



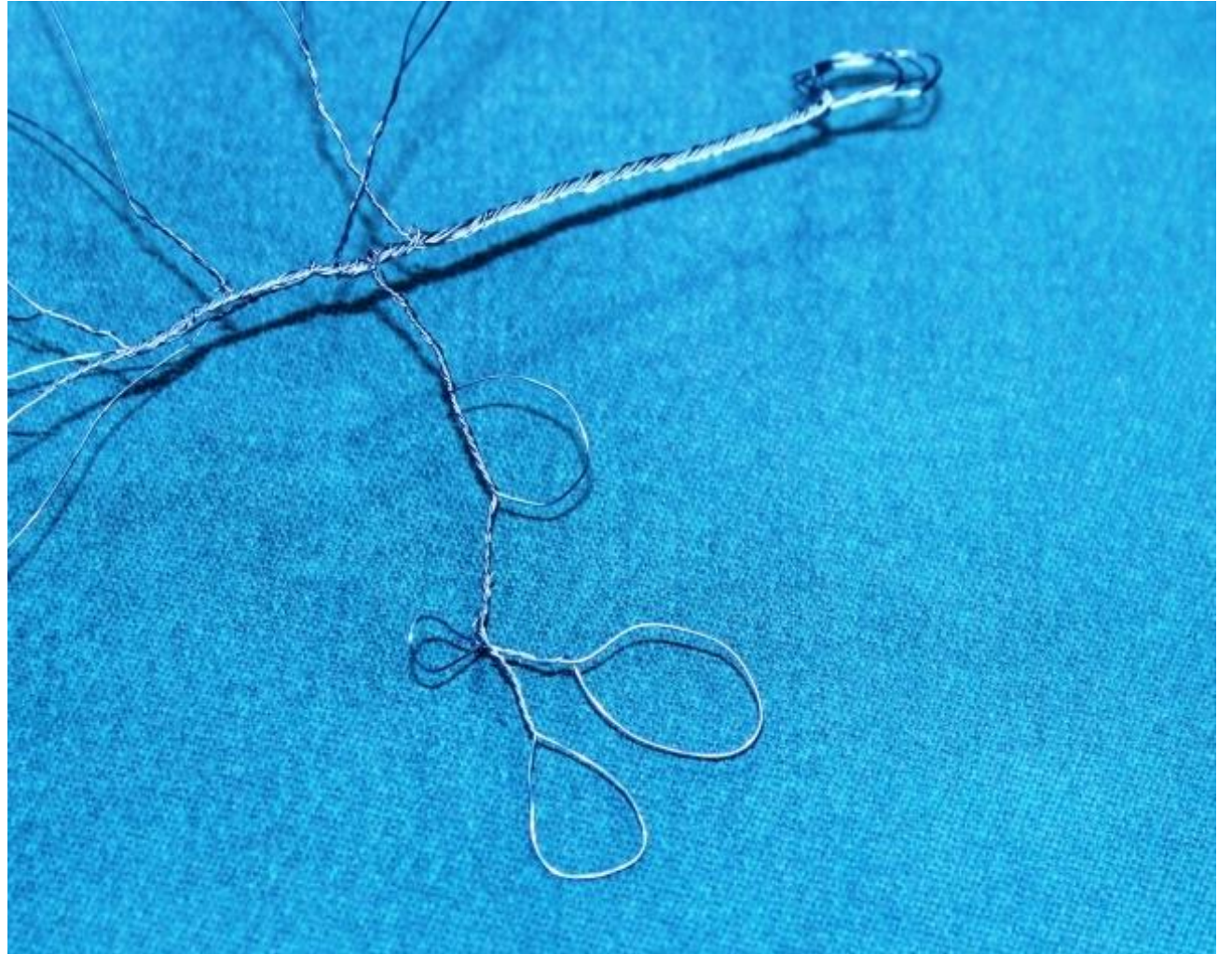
We repeat taking each loop in turn, moving up the trunk, forming all the trunk branches. Make sure that a couple new twists of the trunk occur so that each trunk branch is separated from the ones below it. The loops are now cut into two wires.



We repeat the previous process to form smaller branches on the trunk branches. This is done by forming smaller and smaller loops with the remaining strands of wire. The loop at the bottom of the tree will become its roots.



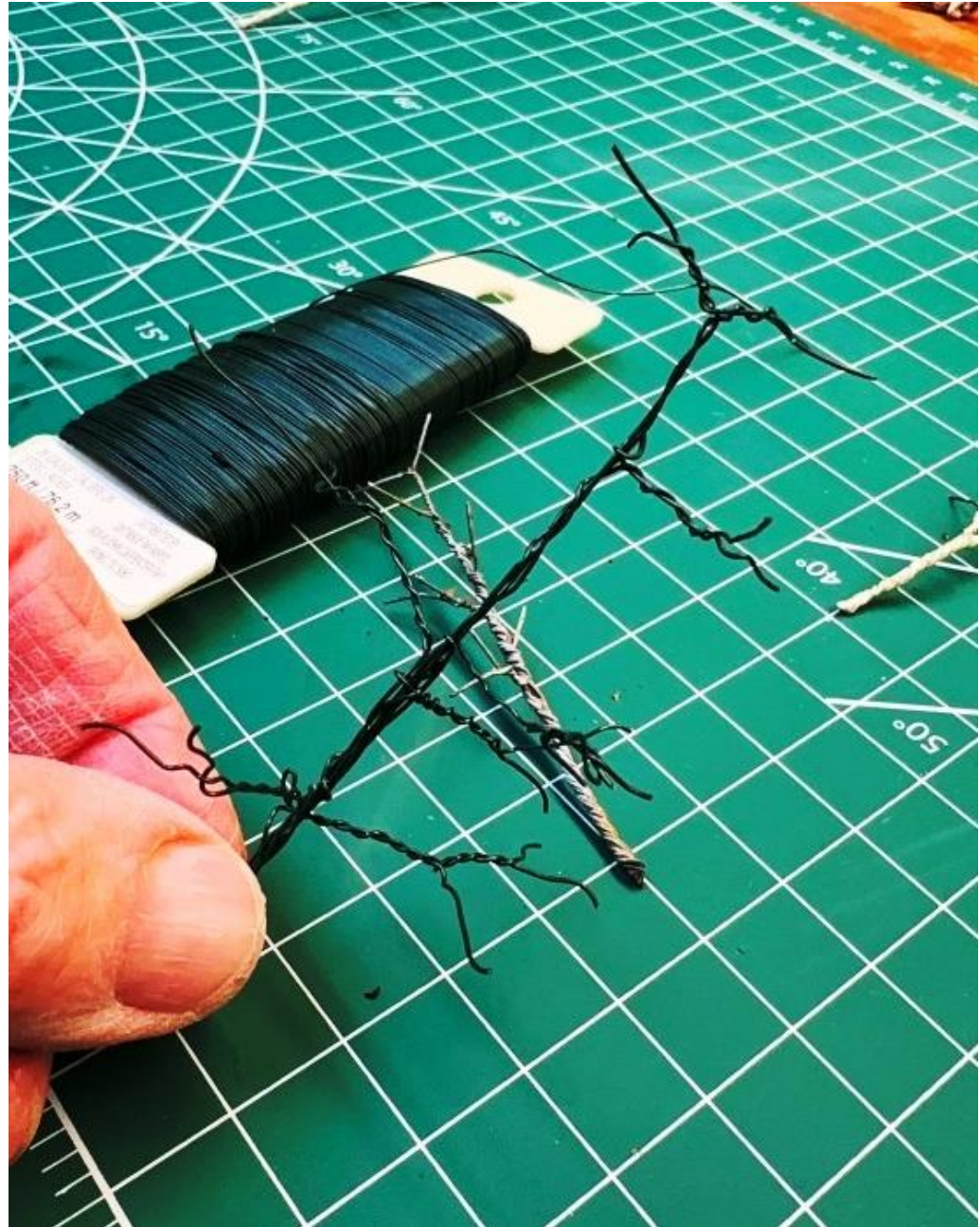
Here is another view of the tree pictured in the previous slide.



The remaining loops of the tree in the previous two slides are now cut into two final (and smallest) branches. The root loop is also cut, spread out, and each root cut to length.



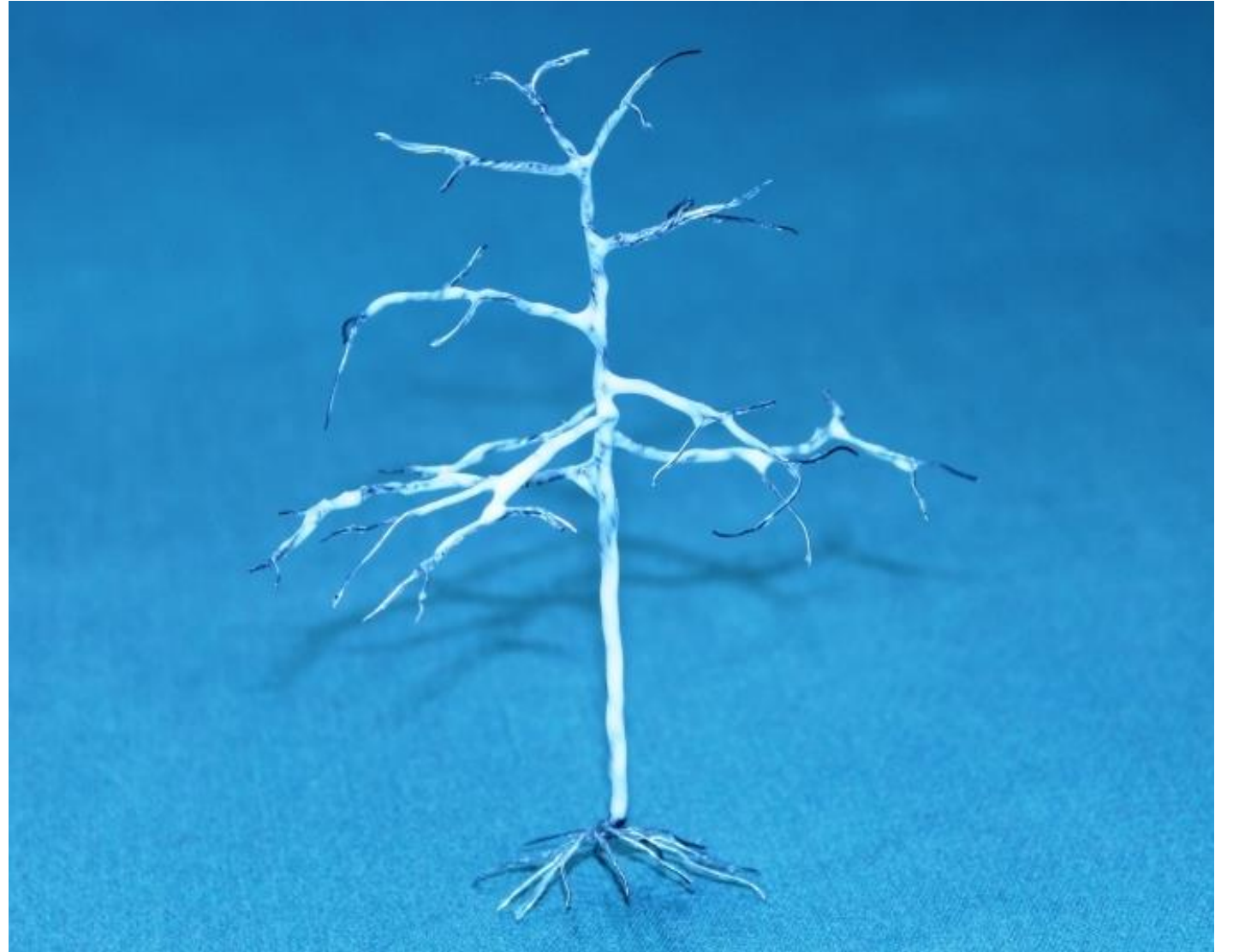
This photo shows another tree being made with 26-gauge wire. I find these to be more difficult to make in HO scale, but it may be a better choice of wire for the larger scales.



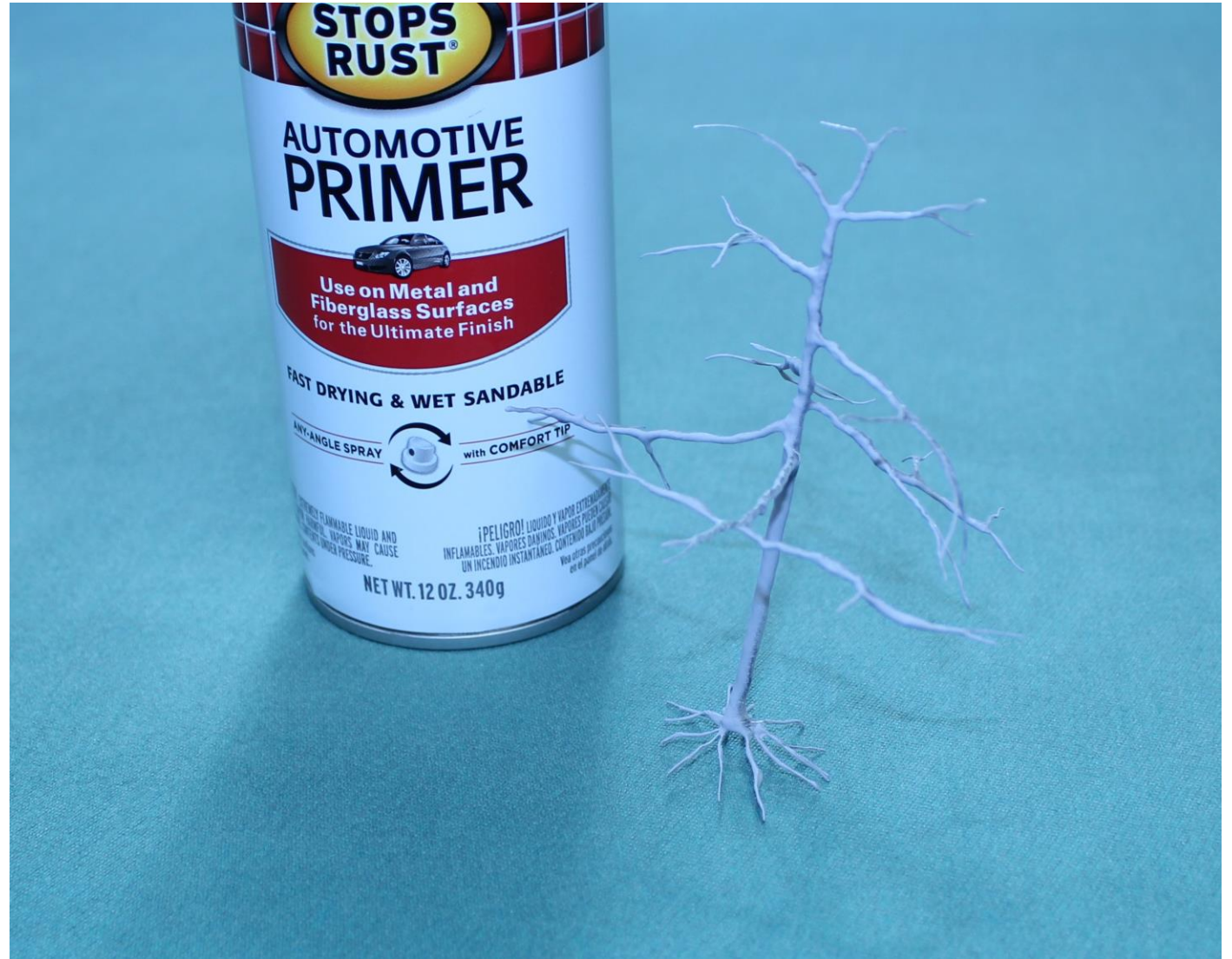
The wire armature tree is now painted with a flexible coating in two or three coats. I use the inexpensive Mod Podge, while a more expensive Woodland Scenics “Latex Rubber” can also be used.



The tree before the second coat of Mod Podge has dried. Do not put Mod Podge on the tip branches because it makes these branches too thick.



After the third coat of Mod Podge, I spray the tree with gray automotive primer.



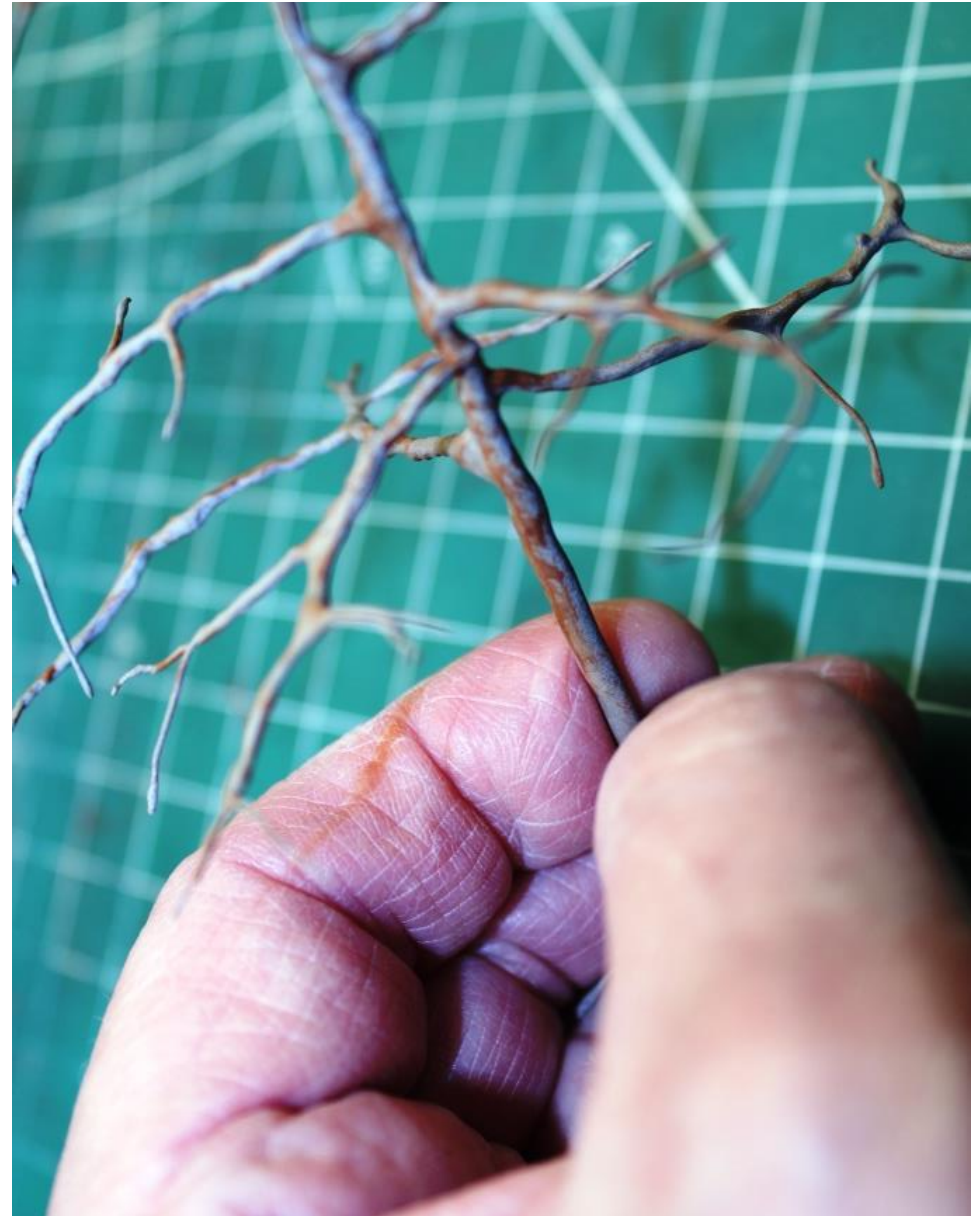
A second coat of an earth color is lightly misted over the gray color.



I then dry brush random patches of burnt sienna onto the trunk and heavier branches.



Here we see the completed tree after the dry brushing of Burnt Sienna.



For leaves, I usually use the different shades of Woodland Scenics foliage. It's easy to spread out and glue to the tree limbs.



You can spot white glue on several of the wire armature tree branches and sprinkle dried leaf litter over the wet glue to form a tree with expired leaves.



Here are a couple of those winter trees with just a few of the dead leaves remaining on the branches.



The tree I demonstrated making in this clinic is part of a winter-scene diorama I am presently building; therefore, no leaves!

