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Outdoor Lighting

With warmer weather coming, more customers will spend time in their yards. Wire them up with the newest trends so they can enjoy that time into the night.

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During the summer months, the yard becomes an extension of the home. Evening, after the hot sun has gone down, is the optimum time to be outdoors. To help maximize a client's enjoyment of their outside space, approach the yard as if it were any other room, layer the light and wire for convenience.

Facade Lighting

"Always try to include some [exterior lighting](#) in the overall design," says Randall Whitehead, lighting designer and author of *The Art of Outdoor Lighting*.

Lighting a house's facade serves two functions. First, it provides security; a well-lit home acts as a deterrent for intruders. A soft wash of light also can increase a home's curb appeal as well. "You want it almost romantic," says Drew Kogan, lighting designer and president of H. Kogan Inc. in Zionsville, Ind.

The type, number and placement of facade fixtures depends on the style and size of the home, Kogan says. "You need to step back and look at [the house] from a distance rather than up close."

Of course, lighting a home's exterior makes it more attractive, but it also has an added benefit. "It not only keeps windows from becoming 'black mirrors' at night, but it also visually expands the interior spaces," Whitehead says.

Decks and Patio Lighting

Decks and patios have become multifunctional outdoor rooms. For that reason, these spaces require more complex lighting and wiring than in the past.

Many outdoor rooms share the same amenities found in kitchens. Built-in cooking areas must have adequate task lighting for after-dark grilling. Outdoor dishwashers, refrigerators and ice makers necessitate additional wiring. Don't forget electrical outlets for small appliances—a blender, for example—which are essential to outdoor entertaining.

To enjoy dining al fresco, your clients will want soft lighting for the outdoor table.

"You don't want to light up the sky," Kogan says. "The beauty of sitting outside in your outdoor living space is enjoying the stars, so you don't necessarily want lights that shine up."

The stairs on decks and patios are another prime place for lighting. Well-lit stairs prevent accidents and look attractive, as well.

Pathway Lighting

Install just enough lighting along pathways to make them inviting and safe. Avoid up-lighting, which can appear harsh. "You don't want it to look like a runway," Kogan says. He recommends low-voltage downlights, which operate on 12 volts as opposed to 120 volts. Space them every 8 to 10 feet on both sides of the walkway. (Make sure the transformer can handle the number of lights specified adequately.)



Pathway lighting with photocell technology can be convenient for your clients. There is no switch to flip; they simply wait for the sun to set and lighting automatically turns on.

For those who prefer a more traditional set-up, Whitehead offers this convenient safety tip: While switches for landscape lighting often are installed near the front door of a home, there's a much better spot for the controls. "Most people enter their homes from the garage," Whitehead says. "This is where a second set of switches should be located."

Garden Lighting

Lights in the garden can be used to highlight plants and decorative elements like statues, fountains and ponds. Fixtures are installed properly when only the illumination—and not the fixture itself—is seen. Kogan cautions that garden lighting should be installed and used judiciously. "You do need for plants to rest at night," he says. "If you keep a light on [a plant], it will continue to grow."

There's something else to consider when it comes to installing lighting in the garden. While dimmers are a must-have for interior lighting and can be used in exterior rooms, they should be avoided when it comes to landscape applications. "Standard incandescent light, when dimmed, becomes even more amber in color," Whitehead says. "Green plants look sickly under yellow light."

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