



Light the night

The best outdoor systems combine beauty and function

By Amber Barz

One are the days when a porch light or gas lamp were a home's only outdoor lighting options. Today's alfresco lighting systems show off the best features of your home and landscape while making it easier for guests and family to enjoy the great outdoors.

With the exception of candles, oil lamps and solar-powered lighting, illumination devices need to be connected to an electrical or gas supply.

ply. Outdoor electrical lights either receive power directly from a socket or through a transformer that provides a low-voltage current. Gas-lights can be powered from a buried gas line or hidden propane tank.

Choosing the right combination of fixtures attractively illuminates gathering areas and makes it difficult for intruders to sneak onto your property.

Fixture options

Regardless of how your fixture is powered, you can choose from a variety of lighting options:

- ◆ **Accent lights** emit a soft glow to accentuate plantings or landscape features.
- ◆ **Path lights** illuminate walkways.
- ◆ **Task and spotlights** direct a focused beam on

Quick tip

Call first!

For safety's sake, before you dig holes to install pole fixtures or bury electrical cables, call 811 to request your utility companies to mark the location of all underground wires and pipes. The service is usually free — and you'll avoid dangerous and expensive surprises. Regulations on digging vary by locality.

a dark area of your lawn or garden or spotlight a specific feature, such as a tree or fountain. These fixtures either mount on an exterior wall or on the ground.

- ◆ **Downlights** can bathe an area in light and are excellent for security.
- ◆ **Uplights** can accent architectural features or show off taller bushes or trees.
- ◆ **Ceiling or wallmount fixtures** are ideal for lighting a covered porch, the sides of a garage or the corners of a house.
- ◆ **Specialty lights** include string lights, torches, underwater lights, lanterns, lamps, stair lights, post lights and outdoor chandeliers. They create ambiance or provide additional general light.



Something's new under the sun

If ease of installation or portability is a priority, opt for solar power. These fixtures require no wiring: Place them in a sunny spot, and when dusk arrives they come on automatically.

All solar fixtures are not created equally. Look for solar fixtures that are equipped with light-emitting diodes. LEDs create light without generating heat so they require less electricity to operate. The result is a brighter light that will typically shine for years. Other recent advances in solar technology include efficient photovoltaic cells and efficient batteries. These advances enable solar lights to perform reliably year-round — even on short winter days.



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