

# Exterior lighting can add ambiance

## Add a dramatic effect on landscaping with inexpensive fixtures

The value of the right lighting in a home is undeniable. Lighting can instantly transform a room and create the ambiance homeowners are looking to establish. Though it might be mostly seen as a way to create mood inside a home, lighting also can do much for lawns and gardens.

Backyards have come a long way over the last several decades. Once reserved as play areas for children and stomping grounds for the family dog, backyards have become oases for homeowners and their families. Outdoor living areas are wildly popular and no

such area is complete without exterior lighting. In fact, a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders found that 85 percent of home buyers want exterior lighting, making it the second most desired outdoor feature (patios topped that list).

Exterior lighting can have a dramatic effect on landscaping and estimates from the online financial resource Kiplinger.com suggest such lighting is inexpensive, with installation averaging roughly \$67 per fixture.

When installing exterior light-

ing around their landscapes, homeowners can keep various tips in mind to create a relaxing, awe-inspiring mood on their properties at night.

- Consider uplights. Uplights are installed in the ground and direct light up at a tree, focusing on its trunk or canopy. This creates a dramatic effect that makes it possible to enjoy majestic trees at night just like you might when spending time in the yard during the day.

- Focus on trees. Many homeowners already have exterior lighting lining their walkways and

patios, but focusing on trees can create an entirely different look. Though it's possible to install exterior tree lighting on your own, landscaping professionals with lighting experience know which fixtures will pair most effectively with the trees around your property and how to arrange them for maximum effect.

- Opt for warm light. Warm white light creates an inviting feel around the property. The exterior lighting experts at Utah Lights acknowledge that choice of lighting is up to homeowners but also note that, in situations with lower

levels of ambient light, such as in exterior lights around a property, people typically prefer warmer light. That's because warm light tends to be easier on the eyes and directs attention to the features of the landscape, which is many homeowners' goal when installing exterior lighting in their yards.

- Utilize a timer. Modern exterior lighting timers make it easier than ever to control the lights outside a home. Many such timers even adjust for the changing seasons and the shifting hours of daylight. That means homeowners shouldn't have to tinker with the timer once it's set.

Exterior lighting can add significant appeal to a property without breaking the bank.

# How to prepare a garden for spring planting

## Consider these tips to restore gardens so plants and vegetables can thrive

The first few weeks of spring are still chilly in many parts of the world. Despite those last vestiges of winter chills, it is a great time to begin preparing gardens for the coming planting season.

Gardeners can consider the following tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

- Disinfect your tools. If tools were not disinfected at the end of the previous gardening season, disinfect them before doing any work on the garden. Doing so can ensure any lingering bacteria or fungi on tool surfaces are killed prior to the beginning of gardening season.

According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria and viruses, can be transferred to and infect plants through bits of soil and plant debris left on shovels and pruner blades. Thoroughly disinfecting such tools prior to using them in the spring is a great way to reduce the risk of disease in

your garden.

- Clear debris from garden beds. Leaves, twigs, sticks and other debris may have gathered in the garden over the winter. Such debris can inhibit the growth of plants and vegetables, so make sure all of it is removed prior to planting. Weeds might even begin to sprout up in early spring, so remove them before they go to seed.

- Test the soil. Testing the soil prior to planting can help gardeners determine what their gardens will need to thrive in the coming

months. Garden centers and home improvement stores sell home testing kits that are effective and easy to use. Once the results are in, speak with a professional at your local garden center about the best time to amend the soil.

- Loosen compacted soil. Soil can become compacted over winter. If compacted soil is not loosened prior to planting, plants will have a hard time getting the water and nutrients they need to thrive. Loosening the soil also provides another opportunity to inspect the garden for any underlying issues,

such as fungi or weed growth, that you may have missed when clearing debris or testing the soil.

Gardeners should assess a gar-

den and address any issues that developed over the winter so plants and vegetables can thrive during the spring planting season.

- bulk garden seeds
- seed potatoes
- pine nuggets
- onion sets
- mulch
- potting and top soil

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