

The Night-time Garden

Rosalind James-Cattell looks at using lighting to highlight your garden on summer evenings

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN WILLSMORE

Outdoor or landscape lighting adds another dimension to the enjoyment of outdoor living. It not only extends the time you spend outdoors but also gives a completely different appearance to a familiar garden.

Everything in the garden and its surroundings is visible during the day, including those features you would rather ignore, such as the shed, neighbouring houses and power lines. When night falls, however,

cleverly placed lights can highlight the aspects you want to be seen.

Gain inspiration from looking at the way public buildings and outdoor spaces are lit. Most ideas can be adapted satisfactorily to a smaller scale. Many of the techniques used in outdoor lighting come originally from the theatre. Dramatic directional lighting creates a fantasy scene by illuminating features and such focal points as graceful trees, ponds, interesting architectural items or plants.

Here and following are some of the methods you can use to stunning effect:

▲ Silhouetting

Sometimes called backlighting, here the light source is placed behind the object to be lit, creating truly dramatic lighting effects. An opaque object, such as a statue, will have its outline defined, but its detail will remain shrouded in shadow. A translucent object, such as foliage, will gleam.



◀ Shadowing

Lighting that creates shadows can be used to great dramatic effect. Shadows of leaves, topiary, trellis or statuary can be projected onto house walls, or across lawns, decks or terraces. Adjusting the size of these shadows can be a very effective way to evoke strong moods in the night-time garden as shown here with shapely herons.



▲ Spread lighting

This uses specially designed fittings mounted on a pole to throw pools of light onto the ground. Ideal for illuminating low-level planting, it is also an effective alternative for lighting paths or drives.



▲ Water reflection

At night, a pool, pond or lake becomes a mirror. Lighting an object near the edge of the water, or branches overhanging it, will create reflections in the surface.

▶ Downlighting

Here the light source is placed above and slightly in front of the object to be lit. It is used to emphasise the architectural features of a house or garden buildings, to highlight doorways or gates or to spotlight objects. Powerful downlighting is employed to add additional light for general luminance, for security and for access and safety. Depending on where it is placed, it can also create interesting shadows, such as the eerie effect of this stone gargoyle.

