

How To Choose An Outdoor Lighting Professional

Tips from the pros on making
the right choice.



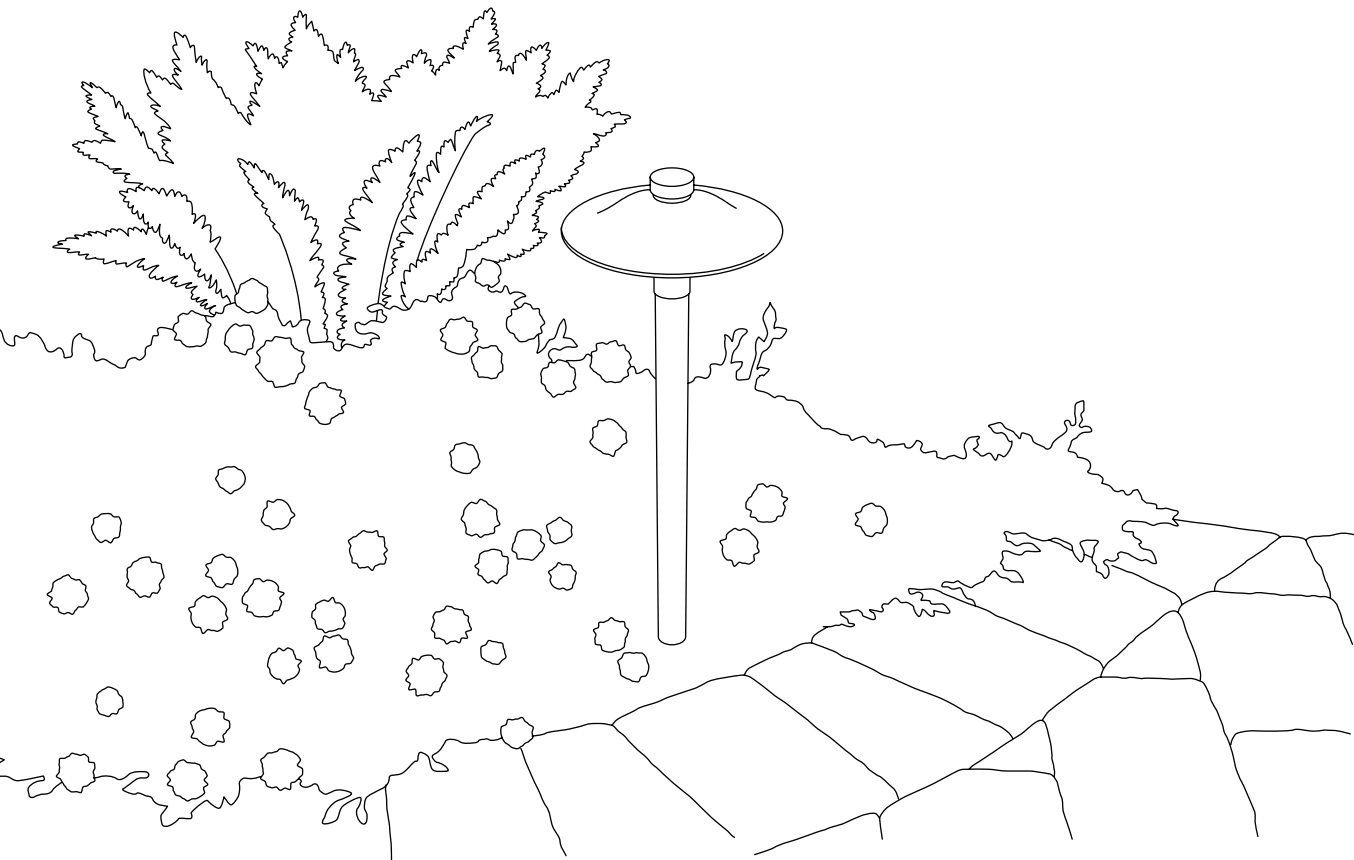
Professional lighting for your home can provide several benefits. It offers curb appeal and enhanced safety for pathways, walkways and steps. A well lit home can also deliver an added layer of security to deter unwanted visitors. Another benefit is the extension of outdoor living spaces. To enjoy your outdoor space, you need the right lighting that allows you to entertain without providing harsh glare to your guests.

When considering outdoor lighting there are several options to choose from. DIY products are available in big box stores and online. Solar lights are everywhere, but don't provide a sufficient amount of light output to light a pathway properly. Line voltage lighting is an option, but a licensed electrician must install it and bulbs tend to burn out quickly. *(Not to mention a higher electricity bill.)*

The obvious choice for landscape lighting is low voltage professional lighting.

Professional landscape lighting typically includes:

- A custom design
- Quality product
- Thorough installation
- Ongoing service to maintain the system.



DESIGN

Less is more with landscape lighting. Over lamping and poor placement of fixtures can wash out landscaping and create unnecessary glare for the homeowner. When working with a professional designer a needs analysis should be developed to determine the goals for the homeowner.



Pathway Lighting

Energy efficient path lights direct light downward to showcase pathways and highlight low flowerbeds. Avoid placing the fixtures in a straight line and be sure to choose quality fixtures that have a large light spread.

Up-Lighting and Grazing

Create that welcome home feeling in the evening hours by evenly up-lighting your home. Be sure to highlight those special architectural details that set your home apart. Extend the look of your home and add a pop of color by highlighting some specimen trees in the front yard.

Lighting for Outdoor Living Spaces

Daylight savings may be around the corner but a well-designed lighting plan will help extend your outdoor living into all four seasons of the year. Don't forget the perimeter trees to create some depth in your backyard. You will most likely find that the evening hours are soon to be your most cherished!

Deck and Step Lighting

There are great options for under mount deck lights that don't show much by day, but certainly give off a great deal of light at night. Rope lighting almost completely disappears by day when installed properly underneath a deck rail. It gives off a soft glow in the evening hours. Step lighting is an ideal way to keep your stairs safe by placing lights in the stairs themselves.

Festive Lighting

What a great way to spice up your patio or pergola to create the perfect space to entertain. Your local lighting professionals have just the lighting solutions for you to get the party started whether you are shopping for temporary or permanent lighting solutions.



PRODUCT

Don't get caught up in how the fixture looks. Most fixtures are buried and you will not see them. The more important thing to consider is the fixture material and what type of effect will it create.

Fixture Quality

This is essential to the longevity of your system. Professional lighting companies use commercial grade copper and brass fixtures that stand up to any outdoor environment. The natural metals will develop a patina that will blend in with the landscape. Avoid powder coated aluminum or plastic solar fixtures.

LED or Halogen?

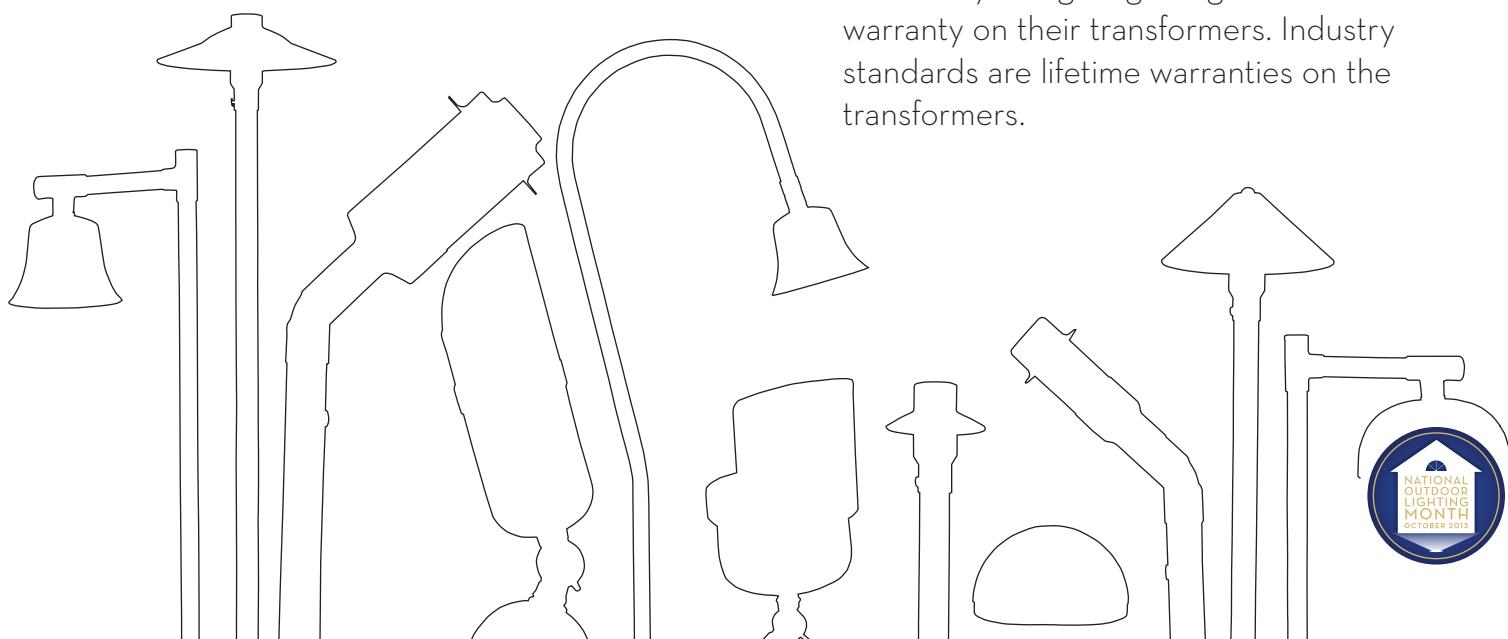
These are two options when considering a professional lighting system. With LED you will achieve a longer bulb life and up to 80% savings in electricity. Be sure your lighting designer is using high quality bulbs like GE, Sylvania and Cree for extended life and lumen output.

Timing Options

Digital timers and photocells are standard timing controls. A more advanced approach is Lighting Control Automation. LCA allows you to control different zones with your landscape lighting and provides further expansion capabilities with additional outdoor lighting.

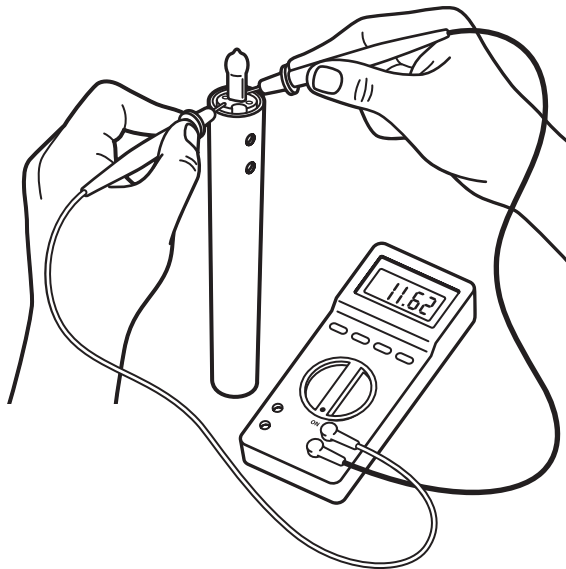
Transformers

The heart of any lighting system depends on how well the transformer holds up. A multi tap transformer should be specified from the job. This type of transformer allows the proper adjustment of the voltage at each fixture. Be sure that your lighting designer offers a solid warranty on their transformers. Industry standards are lifetime warranties on the transformers.



INSTALLATION

After a custom design and professionally grade fixtures the installation is the next step.



Coordination

If additional backyard projects are in progress, be sure to partner the other contractors with the lighting designer and installer to discuss the lighting system.

Care of Your Property

This should be paramount with your installer. After completion, the property should look as good as it did when the installer arrived.

Exposed Wire

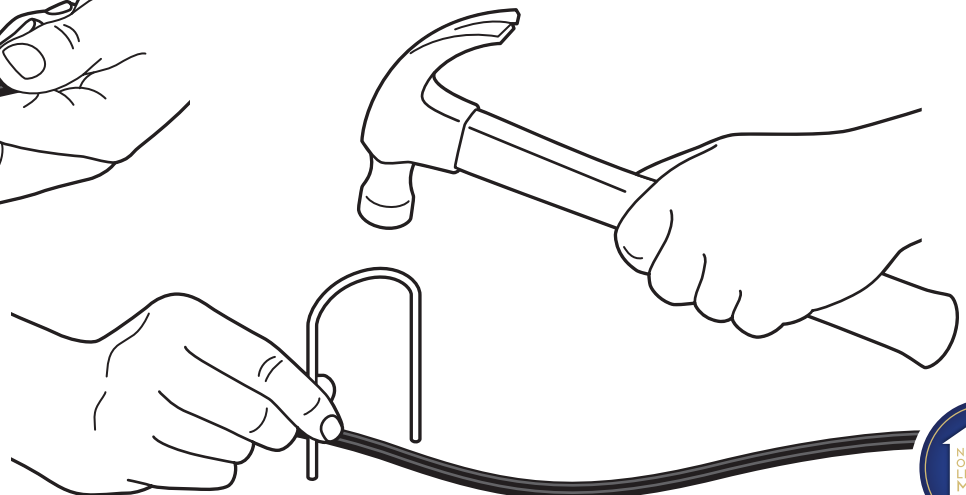
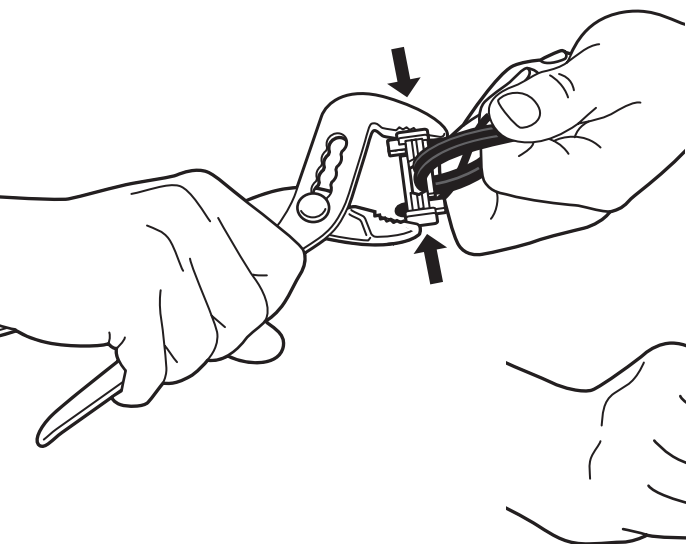
You should not see any wire after your installation is complete. All wire should be buried a minimum of 6 inches.

Voltage Drop

Recommended voltage at each fixture should be 10.8-11.5 volts. If the system is not properly balanced, some fixtures may incur voltage drop. If this happens, the light output for each fixture will be different, and in many cases, burn out faster or not produce enough light at all.

Nighttime Adjustment

Once the installation is complete a nighttime adjustment should take place to ensure proper light output and placement.



SERVICE

To keep your low voltage halogen or LED lighting system running at its peak performance year round it should be serviced annually. The purpose of a maintenance plan is to provide you with a “worry-free” lighting system.

Voltage Balance

If the voltage is not correct on your system, LED or halogen, it causes lamp failure. Once one lamp burns fails, others will follow because their voltage may have changed.

Trimming and Pruning

Over growth of bushes, plants or trees can cause unnecessary shadows and even block the light completely. If you have plant material growing on or on top of the light fixtures, it will interfere with the lighting design.

Lumen Depreciation

Bulbs dim over time. Change all halogen lamps annually. (LED lamps are changed only as needed.)

Bury and Clean

Thoroughly clean lenses, clear out debris or mulch if needed. All wire should be reburied to prevent any damage.

Reposition

All fixtures should be examined to be sure they are straight and buried to the proper depth. Crooked and misaligned fixtures will affect the integrity of the design.

Timer Check

Change timing options to run longer or shorter at night.



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