

Light Up Your Exterior

By JOE SZYNKOWSKI | Green Shoot Media

Don't underestimate the power that outdoor lighting has on curb appeal and the security of your home. Proper landscape lights can highlight architectural features on your building that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Give your exterior an update by taking advantage of affordable lighting systems.

You might think the extra electricity used to feed your outdoor lights will impact your utility bill negatively. The truth is that these low-voltage systems require a small amount of power, are relatively safe to work with and are less expensive to install.

HOW LOW-VOLTAGE LIGHTING WORKS

To understand how outdoor lighting systems operate, you should understand the different components working together.

Learn about the important pieces as reported by Popular Mechanics.

Transformer: This is the heart of the low-voltage system. It directly plugs into a GFCI-protected outlet and drops the house current from 120-volt down to just 12. It is rated to the maximum-wattage output, which is determined by the number of lights that will rely on the same transformer.



REAL ESTATE 101

The Green Choice

If energy savings is your primary reason for choosing low-voltage lighting, consider these tips from the U.S. Department of Energy.

- Flood lights with motion sensors are a great security option that will save energy by not needing to be on all evening
- Consider timers for decorative lighting or outdoor security lights
- Use energy efficient LED or fluorescent lights in place of incandescent lights
- Look for the ENERGY STAR rating in order to get the most energy-efficient lighting options available.

A qualified landscaping professional can determine the safest way to install the proper components.

Low-voltage cable: This special cable is designed to be buried underground, making it possible to maintain the lawn around your

lights without being obtrusive. They connect to the transformer and to each light fixture. A low-voltage cable is offered in different thicknesses (or gauges), and the proper cable size depends on the wattage of the transformer being used.

BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR LIGHTING

There are several different reasons why lighting up the exterior of your home is a good idea. Consider the benefits you'll gain when you make the investment.

BOOST CURB-APPEAL

Using accent fixtures to spotlight landscape features on your property, such as trees, flower beds or ponds, creates a beautiful image that will inspire guests to take notice. Another great way to add beauty to your yard is by creating a well-lit pathway leading to your door. Thanks to the ability to bury a low-voltage cable, you can be creative in how you make your display.

SECURITY

An efficient way to deter thieves from attempting a break-in is to ensure your home is well lit. Motion, or floodlights near points of entry can dissuade someone with bad intentions since their actions may be easily witnessed by a neighbor.

SAFETY

Don't forget your own safety. Traveling outside in the dark can create tripping issues, having the extra light to see where you're going can save you from unseen hazards.