

Landscape Lighting

We did a landscape design for one of my neighbors a while ago. At the time, they did not have enough in their budget for landscape lighting. So, being the great neighbor that I am, I gave them some ideas and suggestions that they could use later. I had installed solar landscape lighting in my yard and used that as an example. Well, a few months later I noticed a very bright light in my back yard and went outside to investigate. My neighbor had just installed his landscape lighting. The two Mesquite trees that



were lit appeared to be a super bright celestial manifestation of some sort. It looked as if airplane landing lights had been used to up-light the trees.

Because we live in the desert and nighttime use of our yards is very important, landscape lighting should be an important consideration of any design. It seems that lighting products are improving faster than any other landscape element. A little bit of landscape lighting will go a long way. You don't need to light every square inch of your yard, in fact you don't want to. The play of light and shadow using different techniques can create the ambiance you desire.

Most manufacturers will design your landscape lighting if you buy their product. Here are a few things to remember if you decide to design your own lighting. Less is more- shadow gives depth to landscapes. Don't wash things out with too much light. Form follows function- start by lighting the use areas such as paths and patios to the desired level and then light focal points whether it be a plant, wall, piece of art or other unique feature. Watch the Kelvin (K) rating of the lamp- low kelvin outputs are very yellow making plants look lifeless and high kelvin is very blue making plants look artificial. Landscape looks best at kelvin levels between 2200 and 3000. Consider the control of the lighting- I personally like my lighting to come on at dusk and then turn off a certain number of hours after dusk. There are controllers that can do anything you want it to do. You can even control your system through your smart phone.

Have fun with your landscape lighting. Create your system with built-in flexibility so that you can adjust fixture locations and lamp types until you get the affect you want.

"Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man."
— Benjamin Franklin

FAVORITE FLORA: AUCUBA JAPONICA- GOLD DUST PLANT



This month's favorite flora is native to China, Korea and Japan. Its native habitat usually consists of rich forest soils in moist valleys, most often near streams or other sources of water. However, the Gold Dust Plant (*Aucuba japonica*) can be grown in Las Vegas. It was introduced to England in 1783 and became widely cultivated by gardeners in the 19th century. Soon it was realized that the Gold Dust Plant could fill a void in landscapes that most plants struggle to survive in, dry, shady areas. This evergreen shrub has large green leaves covered in yellow spots in which its name is derived from. It grows to about 3-5 feet tall and wide in Las Vegas or as much as 9 feet tall and wide in conditions better suited to its natural habitats. Small purple flowers appear in spring and can give way to red berries on female plants. Aucuba

japonica is a dioecious plant meaning that there are male and female plants, both having flowers.

This plant can and should be grown in heavy shade in Las Vegas and within well drained soils. The Gold Dust Plant is tolerant of average to poor soils and temperatures down to -5 degrees Fahrenheit. It can be grown as a backdrop in a shady alcove or on a patio where other plants may stretch to reach sunlight. The Gold Dust Plant can also be grown indoors. Its leaves bring interest year round and can fit well with other evergreen shrubs of Japanese or tropical themed landscapes.

Photo of the Month



Las Vegas Skyline
Las Vegas, NV
Tanner Chee