

### Ahhh ... The Lights

As I sit at my desk on these dark late afternoons I look straight out my window at the incredible Christmas light display at Ethel M Chocolate Factory and Cactus Garden. The many colored lights wrapped around the trees, draped over the shrubs and outlining the unique varieties of cactus. It is a festive reminder of the season we celebrate this time of year. It is also a reminder of the importance of lighting in the landscape.



Living in the desert during the summer time necessitates that most of our outdoor time occurs after the sun goes down. Living on the east side of a time zone during the winter the landscape is in the dark long before the work day is over. Landscape lighting is an important part of our landscape enjoyment. Landscape Architects are skilled in designing lighting to not only provide safety but to dramatically highlight and accent the landscape for nighttime enjoyment.

Landscape lighting needs to be properly utilized to provide safety, functionality, dramatic affects and visual pleasure. I have seen some well intentioned, but poorly executed lighting layouts which look a lot like runway lights leading up to a front door. Lighting, like plant placement, must have a reason for being. The play of light and dark can provide dramatic effects. Specimen plants can be back lit, silhouetted or washed with light. The proximity of a light fixture to a plant can change the effect the light has on the plant. Moonlight effects can be achieved by down lighting from above a tree and letting the light wash through the branches to the ground. Light can be used as a marker rather than a means to light an area.

There are so many new lighting products that can light just about anything efficiently, dramatically and cost effectively. The next time you ask us for a landscape design, let us design the landscape lighting also. Our design expertise goes beyond providing enough foot candles for an area to creating the nighttime experience that will leave a long lasting impression.

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."  
— Thomas Alva Edison

### FAVORITE FLORA: CEDRUS ATLANTICA - ATLAS CEDAR



Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca Pendula'



Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'

Keeping with the holiday spirit, this month's favorite flora is the Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*). The Atlas Cedar is native to the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Algeria, growing in forests at altitudes of 4200 - 7500 feet. While young, this tree keeps a neat, pyramidal shape but spreads to a flat top tree as it ages. The 1 inch long needles range from dark green to blue although the most popular cultivar, 'Glauca', is an outstanding blue tint. Another popular cultivar is 'Glauca Pendula' which retains the blue color but has a weeping form. This tree is very slow growing, especially in the Las Vegas Valley; it may take many decades for this tree to reach its mature height of 40-60 feet and a spread of up to 30 feet. Its deep root system helps to make this tree fairly drought tolerant once established. Deep watering on a regular basis in well drained soil will keep this cedar the happiest. The Atlas Cedar is tolerant of a variety of climates across the United States with specimens growing everywhere from Los Angeles to the South Lawn of the White House. It can be planted in a full sun to partial shade but avoid hot microclimates in Las Vegas such as near parking lots, streets or west walls.

The blue foliage of the Atlas Cedar makes it a perfect focal point, contrasting with darker green foliage of nearby shrubs and trees. This tree can also be mixed with other pines such as the

Italian Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) to give some variety to an evergreen backdrop. *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Pendula' can be trained and shaped to arch over a walkway or water feature to create a one of kind look that is sure to impress. Have some fun with this tree during the holidays and throw some lights and decorations on it to have a Christmas tree you can enjoy year after year.

### Photo of the Month



Car Art  
Goldfield, NV  
Joe Vickers