

Lighting your Water Feature

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Thursday, 06 July 2006

Since we spend many hours outdoors in summer it makes sense to use lighting in your garden. In the contemporary garden the use of lighting has become increasingly important where, when applied correctly, it has the ability to create a whole new world once night falls. Outdoor lighting can be used to new create new dimensions and dramatic effects anywhere in your garden. This is especially so when lighting is used to illuminate moving water, the resulting effect can be stunning.

While recognising the need to apply lighting to their water feature, many people struggle with how to position the lighting. Take into consideration that when it comes to creating your night-time wonderland that less really is more! Creating a sense of theatre through creating silhouettes and shadows is preferable to indiscriminately flood lighting an area. Although there are no hard and fast rules to the application of lighting to your feature, here we will guide you through some important considerations.

Electricity Supply

Since you probably already have a pump installed it is likely that you already have an outdoor power-point. All submersible lighting is low voltage but you will still need somewhere to plug in your transformer. If you do not have an outdoor power source contact a suitably licensed electrician who is experienced with outdoor fittings.

Maintenance

Just as you need to change your light bulbs inside your home you will occasionally need to replace them in your garden. Make sure that your light fittings are easily accessible to ensure performing routine maintenance is as easy as possible.

Colour

White light is most effective with outdoor lighting. Although many coloured lenses are often available they have a tendency to look positively garish in a residential setting. White light is also brighter than coloured lenses and is effective in creating shadows and silhouettes. Coloured lenses are best left to large commercial fountains with vibrant water displays.

Submersible or Dry Mounted Lighting?

When deciding whether to install submersible or dry mounted lighting fixtures, it is important to consider your water quality. If your water is full of algae or muddy then the effect of lighting from inside the water will be lost and the state of your water will be on show.

Clear water can benefit significantly from submersible lighting. Many different effects can be achieved from lighting from within your feature.

Lighting Effects

Still Water

Often is it best to use light fixtures to illuminate surrounding plants and features rather than lighting up the water itself. Lighting from above angled down will create mirrored reflections on the water's surface. The darker the water is the better this effect can be achieved.

Submersible lighting can also be used to create a soft glow across the surface of the water. This is very effective when water lilies are present on the water's surface.

Fountains

To effectively light a fountain the light source must come from within the water angled up at the fountain. This way the light will catch the air bubbles caused by turbulent water making them glow.

Waterfalls

To achieve the best outcome when illuminating a waterfall the light source should be placed behind the waterfall, backlighting it. This creates an entire new look and a sense of drama for your waterfall as evening falls.

Alternatively you could achieve a lovely effect through non directional lighting. Washing a rocky waterfall with light, highlighting the surrounding rocks and plant life rather than the water also provides an excellent look.

Features

There are a few lighting options for features these include:

Lighting the feature from above – this effect is best when lighting is placed in a nearby tree and is at least 3 meters high

angled down at the feature, either in front or behind.

Backlighting the feature – this effect creates a silhouette of the feature and allows the feature to take on a whole new look at night.

Spotlighting the feature – one or two spotlights can be dry-mounted in front of the features and angled up effectively illuminating it.

Underwater light fittings – Submersible light fixtures can be placed either in front or behind the feature (or both) to create a dramatic effect. This is especially so when the water has movement causing the light to ripple over the feature.

Water Walls

Where your water wall clings to the surface of the wall the best option here is to light from within the water. A submersible light angled at the wall here will create a mesmerising effect as it ripples on the water against the surface of the wall.

If your water projects out away from the wall backlighting the sheet of water provides a distinctive effect.

Take Time to Experiment

Before racing out to purchase your lighting it is worth taking the time to test how various lighting techniques will look when applied to your garden. The best way to achieve this is to use a water-proof torch and experiment with it. Shine the torch from above, behind, in front and below the surface of the water until you get the effect you desire.

Tip

Avoid glare! Glare can be annoying when unaddressed. Take time to view your lighting set-up from all angles to ensure glare is minimised.

Danielle Dickinson is an avid water feature enthusiast. She is a regular contributor to Gardening Magazines. Visit her website <http://www.waterfeaturesonline.com.au> for more information on building and maintaining any type of Water Feature as well as a huge range of water gardening products.