

LIGHT FANTASTIC

If you want to enjoy your garden at night as well as during the day and create a superb atmosphere that really brings your garden to life, then you will need to think about adding outdoor lighting.

Like most things related to the garden, introducing lighting is easier said than done. Not only are there many different types of lighting to choose from, but you also need to decide what to use where and how to ensure the entire installation operates safely and is well protected against the element.

In the main, there are three types of lighting that are used within gardens; standard mains lighting which can be connected directly to the mains, low voltage halogen lighting which needs to be connected to a transformer that will need to be placed in a watertight box and hidden or buried, and the latest LED lighting which also needs a transformer but has a bulb life of around ten years so requires much less maintenance.

To some extent, which you should use will depend on a number of factors such as if you require a wide or narrow beam or do you need to introduce colour. Although mains lighting is easier to install because no transformer is required, the light fittings are relatively large and as a result, it tends to be used in planting beds where high density of light is required and the fitting can be hidden to some extent. Low voltage and LED lighting offer a warmer, less intense light and work well when used together. When it comes to applications, low voltage lighting is better for lighting features while LED lighting is ideal for illuminating pathways & other trafficked areas. It is particularly good for installing directly into decking, steps or pathways because it doesn't get hot and won't burn your feet if walked on. LED also has the added advantage of being available in a wide range of colours.

Indeed, Xternal Dimensions has devised a unique lighting system using special multicolour LED's to create an impressive 'light' pond illuminated with embedded glass bricks that subtly

change the colour of the water in a pre-programmed sequence that runs slowly through the spectrum.

From a safety point of view, it's essential to ensure that the proper outdoor fittings are used together with armoured cable to protect against the elements and any accidental damage which may occur when doing the gardening. It is also best to use good quality fittings which will last despite the rigours of our British weather.

When it comes to choosing where to site your lighting, think not just about how the light will illuminate specific features or planting areas, but also how it can be used to reflect off walls, sculptures, water features or even plants to create interesting shadows and effects.

Don't forget to illuminate anywhere that might be a potential hazard in the dark - you don't want to end up in the garden pond after a couple a drinks!

Finally you should think about how you are going to control your lighting. Today, there are a wealth of sophisticated control systems that enable the garden to be lit to suit particular applications or create different effects. For example, subtle lighting to produce a romantic atmosphere or more targeted lighting to illuminate a patio or dining area for evening entertaining. You can even make your garden look completely different by switching the way the lighting emphasises various features within the garden. It's also possible to introduce dimmers and even remote control handsets which enable the lighting to be controlled from anywhere in the house or garden.

For further information, you can call Xternal Dimensions on **0870 240 7067** or check out their website at **www.xdl.co.uk**