



Backyards like this one by Toronto Landscape Design top the list of renovations Canadian homeowners plan to tackle this year. SUPPLIED

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Design strategies that will help improve safety and create ambience indoors and out

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After months of working from home, it's no surprise many Canadians have been renovating their houses and in one survey after another, backyards have claimed top spot in spaces we most want to update.

"People are investing the money they've been accumulating because they're not spending it at restaurants or bars or travelling into their backyards," says Michael Tiribelli of Toronto Landscape Design. "They're basically creating private sanctuaries and little private resorts."

Landscape lighting is a key component of any outdoor retreat.

"Homeowners are recognizing its benefits," he says. "It provides an extra dimension to their landscaping in the evening and is a critical part of the overall scope of any landscape project."

BENEFITS ARE NUMEROUS

Sascha Lafleur, co-founder and principal senior designer at West of Main Design in Ottawa, agrees. "Much like your indoor living areas, your outdoor spaces need some accent pieces to complete the look. Keep in mind the overall atmosphere of your backyard and enhance it with lighting, accessories and, of course, plants," she says.

"Strategic exterior lighting design can accentuate beautiful parts of the home and its landscape and camouflage the not-so-appealing features," says Diana Rose, principal and creative director of Diana Rose Design in Markham. "This way, you can truly enhance the curb appeal of the home, highlighting only the best."

Landscape lighting is also practical.

"A well-lit home is a deterrent for anyone with dubious intentions. Sensor-based lighting system also acts as a reactor for any unwanted pets or visitors," Rose says.

A properly-lit driveway and walkway to the front door also offers personal comfort when you arrive home late at night.

MAPPING OUT A DESIGN

There's plenty to consider when planning a landscape lighting layout, beginning with safety. Prioritize elements that need to remain visible after the sun sets, including walkways, steps and porches, Lafleur advises. Ditto the pool and cabana, if you have those.

Next, consider how you use your outdoor space and make sure your design accommodates those activities while enhancing the ambience.

"Be sure to incorporate task lighting where required, such as the cooking/barbecue area, dining area, sitting area and bar," says Lafleur.



Landscape lighting can make a house more inviting to guests and less inviting to thieves. PROSCAPE LAND DESIGN INC./LANDSCAPEONTARIO.COM

Then, add accent lighting to bring depth to your design.

"Focus on trees and plants, and any special features like a pond, garden gazebo or trellis," she says.

Tiribelli likes to illuminate large trees to create height and cast light along the perimeter of the property to create depth.

LIGHTING TRENDS

Finally, your design should enhance your home's curb appeal.

"For finishes and colour, we would explore the options of light fixtures that complement the home's exterior materials and its architectural elements, so the overall composition looks seamless and integrated," says Rose.

"For outdoor recreational areas, a nice blend of layered lighting, such as deck lights and fence post lights, can truly create an inviting space that is balanced and multi-dimensional."

Smart technology allows you to control your lights from a smartphone or voice assistant like Alexa, Google or Siri from wherever you are in the world. Customize your lighting by time or by features like the sun schedule, and dim lights to conserve energy. Some lighting systems allow you to change the colour of each bulb to accent foliage and landscape features or set the tone for a party.

"Another great innovation is the LED light integration in the light fixture, as opposed to a conventional light bulb. This allows for lots of creativity, as these fixtures come in very sleek and linear styles that look absolutely elegant," she says.



Incorporate lighting into walkways for a resort-like feel. KINGSCAPE LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION GROUP/LANDSCAPEONTARIO.COM

CREATING A BUDGET

Like just about any home-related project, the cost of landscape lighting can vary dramatically. But you can plan your project in stages.

"We usually recommend planning out the entire landscape design and rough-in the wiring for when the homeowner is ready to install the fixtures in the future," says Rose. "Also, if the project includes the new driveway installation, we usually recommend incorporating a conduit for future light integration."

Proper lighting will always improve a home's curb appeal. Rose has noticed more realtors taking exterior shots as the sun is setting and the landscape lights are on.

"For outdoor backyard, great lighting design offers a welcoming, oasis-like space, which is a fantastic-looking feature."

String lights, twinkle lights, paper lanterns, handmade tin can lanterns, mason jars filled with sand and votive candles, torches and firepits are DIY ways to create ambience in your backyard.

LANDSCAPE LIGHTING DON'TS

- Solar-powered lighting that's improperly installed is a common landscape lighting blunder. The lights only work if the panels absorb and store energy converted from the sun so if they're not placed in direct sunlight, they're dull or don't work. Low-voltage LED lighting, on the other hand, provides true lighting and needs only an outdoor receptacle and a transformer, says landscape designer Mike Tiribelli.
- Mixing light temperatures is another common mistake. Most LED light fixtures come with integrated light bulbs, resulting in various wattages, designer Diana Rose reports.
- Other faux pas include placing a fixture next to a material that distorts the light's intensity or temperature; too few or too many lights, particularly soffit pot lights; and improper scale of fixtures.