

PROGRESS



Light it up

Landscape lighting pros revel in the field's dramatic progress.

Environmental consciousness

The International Dark Sky Association (IDA) was founded in 1988 by astronomer David Crawford, Ph. D. and Dr. Timothy Hunter. Today it has strong support among landscape lighting professionals questing to reduce nighttime light pollution.

"We're trying hard to come up with meaningful criteria to still allow a good lighting portrait to be done and still maintain Dark Sky," Herren says.

LED lighting is gaining momentum, too. Herren, for example, says he has been "100 percent LED" for four years. "LED is the biggest movement right now," he says. "Literally, it's changing the way we look at lighting."

Gosselin goes so far as to say that the change from halogen and incandescent lighting to LED "has been the biggest and most dramatic change in lighting in the last 100 years." LED has invigorated the industry, he says.

Whereas in the 1990s LED lights "were so white they looked blue," they now resemble a typical halogen lamp, Dross says. LED lights are more expensive than other types, but they're worth it, Gosselin says. Not only do they last between 10 and 15 times longer than halogen lamps — about 40,000 hours — they also are easy to install, cost less to maintain and use 75% less energy. "You save money in so many ways," says Gosselin.

Lighting up the future

The "big bad monster" in LEDs is heat, which will destroy an LED, Gosselin says. But LED electronics that facilitate heat dissipation are reaching new milestones, so much so that LED is at the core of landscape lighting's future.

shaped and a partial dome shaped, Dross says. Not to mention, there were few color options, reducing glare was hardly a priority, and fixtures were large and monochromatic.

"In the early days of lighting there was no such thing as a demo kit, so there were really rudimentary tools," says Tommy "The Lighting Geek" Herren. "It was mostly about fixtures."

Lighting as an aesthetic

In the mid-1990s people began thinking of lighting as an aesthetic that could enhance a home, says Dross.

"People were actually using light as a method to design," he says. "Prior to that people felt that landscape lighting was relegated to making sure you didn't trip on the steps when you're going to visit Aunt Mary."

The shift gave consumers an "emotional connection to their yards," says Herren. "That's a completely different ballgame than just buying fixtures."

Depending on the level of its artistry, lighting can add value to a home or take it away. "Bad lighting can make a really great house look like just a trailer," Gosselin says. "And really good lighting can make a cheap place look great. It finishes it all off. It ties the ribbon around it."

In residential communities today, there is an "I want to be better than the neighbors" attitude, Dross says. Homeowners seek drama in their exterior lighting, savoring the stark contrast of darks and lights.

Landscape lighting has come a long way since its nascence. Gone are the clunky fixtures, glaring bulbs and high, electric shock-inducing voltage that dominated the days of yore. In their place are smaller fixtures and wires, more environmentally sound bulbs and myriad more varieties of everything.

Early days

Bill Locklin pioneered lighting for landscapes in 1959, when he invented low-voltage landscape lighting.

"He's basically the grandfather of landscape lighting. He made landscape lighting a viable industry," says Paul Gosselin, president of the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP).

The "Grandfather of Landscape Lighting" improvised with everything from mayonnaise jars and coffee cans to headlights and 12-volt batteries. He also coined the term that inspires the field's artisans today: "See the effect and not the source."

Low-voltage landscape lighting changed the industry, says Jeff Dross, corporate director, education and industry trends at Kichler Lighting.

Fifty years ago, before low-voltage lighting became widely used, says Dross, hard-wired landscape lighting was the norm. It was expensive, buried deep below ground and with 120 volts, presented a high risk of electrical shock.

Low-voltage lighting, on the other hand, "was closer to the earth, buried 6 inches," Dross says. "There's not a risk of electrical shock with 12-volt. You won't get that jolt that would throw you against the wall."

Initially, the industry used only a couple types of lights — a basic cone-

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By J. C. REDD

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