

Nightlighting

Objective: to familiarize crew members with various nightlighting techniques.

Training Materials: sample lighting plan, different outdoor lighting fixtures.

Lesson: *Adding outdoor lighting to a well designed landscape can bring a new dimension to the plantings. In addition, a carefully designed lighting plan can increase safety and security around the home.*

For the most part the landscape industry uses low voltage lighting in residential systems. Low voltage is a versatile option that runs on 12-volt current. It doesn't require a licensed electrician to install, and changes and repairs are more simple than with line voltage systems. With low voltage lighting, the electric lines can be buried 15-20 cm below the surface of the soil.

With low voltage lighting, the lines are wired into a transformer that converts the home's power from 120 volts to 12. The number of lights per transformer should be taken into consideration. Energy slows as it moves along a wire, causing the lights farthest away to be dimmer.

A line voltage system uses 120 volts (the same as a home), must meet local building codes and requires the use of a licensed electrician. Line voltage wires are often buried in a conduit and changes are costly. This type of system is used on a commercial landscape,

where there is the need to power extremely bright lights to illuminate large areas.

Lighting effects: There are many types of outdoor light fixtures. Each creates a different effect and ambience. A creative lighting plan will combine any number of these fixtures resulting in a striking garden at night.

Pathlighting: low lamps used to illuminate walkways and stairs.

Uplighting: also known as spotlighting. The fixture is placed on the ground and directed up to highlight a plant or other feature in the landscape.

Downlighting: also known as moonlighting. One of the most common, yet effective techniques. Two or three downlights in a large tree can light an area or path effectively, reducing the need for a lot of smaller ground fixtures.

Backlighting: Lighting a wall or fence from behind. Creates a silhouette that is particularly effective with taller plants and a light coloured background.

Shadow casting: directing a light at a shrub or tree in front of a wall – creates depth and drama.

- *An effective way to sell nightlighting is to visit the client's garden in the evening and demonstrate the effects of various lights as night falls. Alternately, computer software programs offered by lighting manufacturers allow us to scan in a photo of the client's garden and create lighting effects digitally.*

- *Be aware of light trespass, where unwanted light shines on a neighbour's property.*

