

## When it comes to outdoor and landscape lighting, keeping up with the Joneses can be good for your business!

As you know, the American Lighting Association (ALA) not only offers courses dealing specifically with outdoor lighting techniques using the latest light sources but also provides tips (complete with photography), valuable information, and articles to consumers through its Web site ([www.americanlightingassoc.com](http://www.americanlightingassoc.com)).

There is also a non-profit organization called the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP) that offers certification for outdoor lighting in design (Certified Outdoor Lighting Designer) and installation/maintenance (Certified Low Voltage Lighting Technician). What a great alliance these two organizations can create when it comes to educating the public!

I recently chatted with Paul Gosselin, owner of Texas-based Nightscenes Landscape Lighting Professionals and president of AOLP, for his perspective on consumer awareness since he works directly with homeowners on the installation.

As much as I like to believe that great outdoor lighting techniques are catching on when I delight in all the new intros at market, I continue to see countless homes still using the ubiquitous home center pre-packed sets for pathway illumination and tract builder-grade lanterns at the entrance.

I asked Paul if consumers are aware of the different types of looks that can be achieved. "I would say that the high-end client has become more educated while the general public is still in the Malibu time warp," he answered. However, there is one significant influence that has helped. "Once a neighbor has professional lighting installed, it seems to work its way down the road, which can transform a neighborhood," he stated. While interior design shows on TV have increased consumers' awareness of decorating, "they still push the easy, DIY-type versions instead of professionally designed and installed lighting. This seems to perpetuate the [abundance of] ugly solar lights and glare bomb lighting that we all love to hate," Paul added.

Like many lighting showroom employees have discovered, "If I take the time to explain good lighting versus the solar markers, the clients understand. They've all seen how bad the solar lights are but don't understand light and how to best use it until someone explains it. A great place to do this education is at garden clubs and local outdoor expos," Paul commented.

Fortunately, it seems that some shelter magazines have inspired homeowners. "Most of my clients have seen nice light-

ing somewhere and want it at their homes," Paul explained. "They like to entertain and want their homes to be inviting and beautiful at night. Some mention techniques like moonlighting or uplighting, but they usually need some education on how to create visual interest and focal points. Once we talk for about an hour, they'll usually turn me loose to design a full lighting project that includes just about all types of lighting effects."

What is Paul's opinion of LED as an outdoor lighting source? "There are some very good LED products on the professional lighting market right now, but there is also a lot of junk. It takes homework and testing to find the products that are worth the money. I have gone 100-percent LED for more than two years now with very few problems – much less than I had with halogen lighting," he remarked.

Are consumers resistant to spending more for LED lighting? According to Paul, it's important to explain the savings they'll realize over the life of the system. "I can install a 100-percent LED outdoor lighting system for about 20 percent more than a halogen system," Paul stated. "Once I explain to the client that they will use 75 percent less energy – plus spend very little in maintenance over the years – and that the system ends up costing about 50 percent less than a halogen system over its lifespan, they opt for LED."

Lighting showrooms, consider hosting your own consumer-oriented seminars that demonstrate how dramatic professional lighting techniques can be. Paul has a portfolio of before and after shots to show his clients; if your showroom doesn't have a similar showcase of photographs, taking some should rank high up on your to-do list.

Inside this issue you'll find the latest outdoor lighting products available on the market. Enjoy!

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Paul Gosselin shares these before and after photos with homeowners to demonstrate the dramatic effects that can be achieved.