

Night Ambience

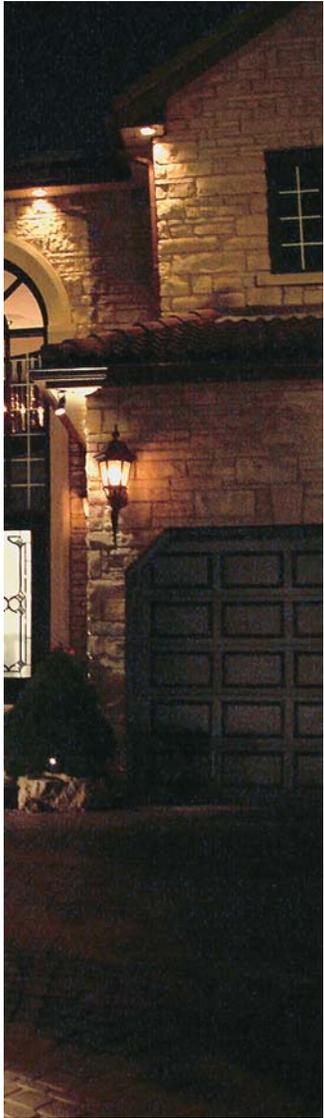
LightFX

Award of Excellence Winner
Lighting Design & Installation

The goal was not to just light this property but to create a specific ambience.

The new system incorporated the existing exterior house lighting and seven individual landscape lighting zones, requiring thousands of feet of wiring. All circuits, excluding HID, are dimmable and have been preset to specific levels so that light levels are harmonious and create a certain mood. The client has the ability to change the mood at the touch of a button..

During the day, the vast majority of fixtures are not visible and those that are remain inconspicuous. The living spaces were lit using warmer incandescent and halogen lamps, while the large specimen trees and some lawn areas were illuminated using the colder-colour mercury vapour lamps. A few high pressure sodium lights were used for accenting and bringing out the colour of the crimson maples.





Night and day on the Finelli's terrace.

Lighting is often the last thing a homeowner thinks about with landscaping, bemoans Bob Maheu of LightFX.

It's unfortunate that this is the case. Attractive lighting in the landscape is not only enjoyable in late into a summer evening, it becomes a primary focus in the winter. "A lot of people get even more enjoyment out of their landscape lighting in the winter than in the summer."

Clients often don't give much instruction when Maheu starts a design. His method is to go in and draw up the ultimate design on paper and then walk the client through the property describing each nuance and feature. From there, they work out what to include and what to drop based on budget and taste.

Since many homeowners call on LightFX after finishing a landscape renovation, their budgets are often tapped out. About half of Maheu's clients elect to do their lighting in phases. By knowing from the start the full extent of what is possible and desired, an intelligent and efficient schedule can be worked out.

In the case of the Night Ambience project, there was already some lighting in place,

but it needed a sensitive hand to make the most of the landscaping.

Colouring with light requires a particularly delicate hand if the landscape is to look at all natural. The clients' pool has a fibre optic lighting system installed with a colour wheel that enables colour changes. Most people expect to see water in a range of white to blue to aqua marine, though, so changing colours would be reserved for wild or ironic effects.

Maheu used a limited palette of colour for the this project, sticking to warm white halogen for areas where people would be

lit; mercury vapour fixtures, with their cool blue tinge to bring out the green on trees; and high-pressure sodium fixtures, which burn in the red end of the spectrum, to bring out the deep tones on crimson maples.

Big trees are up-lit for a dramatic but stately look.

For a long staircase, he chose to aim a mercury vapour light from 70 feet high through a tree. The colour of the mercury vapour mimics moonlight, and by shooting it through the foliage, the sharp shadows you would normally get from the angular steps are softened with a dappled leafy texture.¶

Costing it out: landscape lighting

Rule of thumb:

budget 10-20% of your landscaping costs for lighting

Cost per fixture:

Low voltage, about \$230-350, installed

Note:

Don't skimp on high-quality fixtures; you might save about 25% initially, but in the long run higher end fixtures only amount to about 3-5% of the installed price.



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