

feature article

Lights in the landscape

Solar lights

Care to lighten your garden to make it safer and more enjoyable to walk around after dark?

Solar lights that were sold many years ago have now been replaced by more effective solar panels, energy efficient LEDs (light emitting diodes) and lightweight materials of plastic and metal. Garden solar lights can also be used as a deterrent to burglars.

The soft light created by modern LED solar lighting systems are sufficient to line driveways, walkways, steps and garden features. As discussed in our previous issue the development of LED lights have dramatically enhanced the cost effectiveness of wired lighting systems – solar systems go one step further in positioning landscape lighting within the financial reach of all people.

With an awareness of fossil fuels and the desire to minimise CO₂ emissions, solar panels do not require wiring or professional installation.





Solar panels energise throughout the day and switch themselves on around dusk.

An added benefit of solar lighting is flexibility. Should you move residence or even change the shape of your garden beds, it is a simple case of lifting and moving the lights – no wires, no fuss.

Solar lights work on the principle of light being converted into energy via the photo-voltaic cells and stored in batteries built into the mechanism for use at a later time. As night approaches the 'charging' process is switched off and changed to 'discharging' process in which the batteries now power the lights. To maintain optimal charge keep the solar panel clean, position the panel to capture maximum sunlight and refer to the manufacturer's manual regarding the rechargeable batteries.

It is important to note that a solar light will emit more light for a longer period during a summer's night compared to a winter's night purely by the fact that summer day length is longer. Overhanging branches and cloudy days will affect the duration that light lasts during the night.

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What to look for in a solar light system:

- LED bulbs;
- Access to the rechargeable battery panel
- Sturdy watertight construction;
- Ease of installation; and
- Warranty.