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DESIGN & DECORATING



STACKED DECK Landscape architect Megumi Akira, of San Francisco's Spigel Akira Workshop, used many levels of lighting to bring the Los Angeles pool area in suburban Inglewood to life. Inlaid lights in the trees that leak ambient rays through perforated, split-planing lights integrated into stair risers, and a smattering of Dek Dots from Dekor lighting which are inset into the deck's planking.

Hidden Fixtures

Continued from page D1  
do not just a black hole," said Mr. Hauge, a landscape architect's firm in San Jose, Calif.

The best way to banish muddy shadows is to borrow the sort of layered lighting scheme found in professionally designed living rooms. In simplest terms, you want three tiers. Start with the highest level, so lofty lanterns occupying the sky above the scene or even chandeliers (yes, we're talking about outdoor ones, like the "Worth Wiring"). Next fill in the midrange with scones, illuminated plants or sculptures and table-top portable lanterns. And don't forget low-level illumination—the tiny party, under-cupboard and recessed lighting.

The cumulative effect should be subtle, not stark, "to the feeling of fireflies on a summer night that the new of darkness," as San Francisco designer Tom Ruk put it. "The default has previously been an one-dim space."

At a residence in San Francisco, Mr. Hauge had twenty-bung two outdoor-rated glass chandeliers beneath a nickel metal pergola. To provide eye-level glow, she uplit the knotty trunks of century-old olive trees, then set low LED lighting into steps, doors for safety and a ring of a deck. The chandeliers are "a little over the top, so they're fun and playful and what you don't expect to see outside," said Mr. Hauge.

Subsequent outdoor fixtures are a tall stool dim to rely on, said the landscape architect who pulled a reasonably sized fixture can't house enough photovoltaic cells to produce anything but a sizzly glow. Meanwhile, the latest low-voltage LEDs not only last a long time, they can be easily and cheaply moved. "[In the]

"We can be impactful without being garish or feeling like we're in Las Vegas."

1980s and into the '90s, landscape lighting was a rustic high-voltage electric," said Washington, D.C., landscape architect Joseph Richardson, who recently uplit the overhanging branches of his own Arlington, Va., home. "It meant fixtures were very large and very bulky and the cost was extra. You had to run buried conduit plastic pipes through the yard and if someone was to cut it with a shovel they could be electrocuted."

Today's LED fixtures such as little as 3 watts as opposed to the 35 watts the time in discounts led on, Mr. Richardson said. That means "you can now low-voltage wiring—a small wire that runs on top of soil under mulch," said Megumi Akira, a founding partner and principal of San Francisco's Spigel Akira Workshop. "You can install that in a tree's garden bed, and it would not hurt you if you touched those wires." (Note: The design is not intended to be connected to a professional electrician or landscape firm to at least install you a main to a transformer, which connects your home's 120-volt juice to 12-volt power.)

To light the North Carolina yard (pictured on D1) designer Clay Walker tried to low-voltage specialists Outdoor Lighting Perspectives (OLP) of Charlotte. A black walkway behind her house leads to a small eight-sided gazebo. "You've got your path lights to illuminate the ground and then I like to lift the eye up," said Mr. Walker. Uplift oak trees and Japanese magnolias create a "wonderland" of branches. The path passes a trio of gurgling columns to feature a tree highlighted to provide middle-level illumination, while other lights shine on shrubs, casting shadows on the back exterior of the Georgian-style home.

NO-PRO LAMPS / SIX RECHARGEABLE OR PLUG-IN LIGHTS YOU CAN LAYER INTO A THREE-TIERED SCHEME YOURSELF

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
From left: Hay PC Porcelain Lamp, \$85, store.com; Talenti Tribal Lamp, \$120, Catox, 372-634-9797	From left: Inda Copenhagen Table Lamp, \$88, Serio Decor 888-339-8372; Pedrali Garovita Floor Lamp, \$402, ShopSconce.com	From left: Simple String Lights, \$46, westerlumber.com; Garota Plug-In Pendant, \$106, lightology.com

"This adds a bit of texture and dimension to the wall," said Mr. Zagona, production coordinator at OLP. "It was important to not keep everything in the same level, to create as much depth and texture as possible."

Mr. Walker's gazebo quietly commands attention at night. Two uplit wooden roof lights shine thin lines of light through its slatted roof for a "glowing effect," said Mr. Zagona. "We really thought this created a natural focal point without being too obvious."

Low-voltage lighting helps, too. Akira is currently a mid-level scene in a Los Angeles yard (pictured above). He reworked metal tubes that use light throughout the canopy of delicious trees, a red carpet under the deck and the gateway that surrounds it. Another one of Mr. Akira's tricks: Dek Dots from Dekor lighting. "They're small, half-inch LED dots," she said. "During the day, they disappear, and at night they twinkle on the ground."

Don't wish to deal with a mangle of electrical wiring? You can easily find options to plug into your outdoor sockets that are a lot more aesthetically ambitious than string

lights. Examples include articulating floor lamps and hanging lamps like Lightology's Carota Plug-In Floor Lamp (see "No-Pro Lamps").

Even better: lights that you can carry around as freely as a flashlight. "We're noticing an increased interest in rechargeable, five-stick lighting that runs on LED bulbs and rechargeable batteries," said Owen Welch, Conn., landscape architect James Parker. Check out the cartoonish mushroom lamps from Hay at the MOMA Design Store as well as bedside lamps like the by Talenti. Both double as table-top and night lighting. Mr. Parker favors portable LED lanterns from two branches of decor: the hangover. "You can easily move them around as needed, and guests can use them if they want to go for a stroll."

Other landscape architects are eschewing visible fixtures altogether, the hiding stage of LED is not a rest to take, for one thing. In the courtyard of a Beverly Hills home, design firm Debra Ray + Chan tucked wet-location LED tape under a white stone bench as well as in the ground to shine a wash of light along the bottom of a cypress wall. The goal, as Mr.

Ray put it, is to achieve lighting "that you do not perceive as coming from fixtures but naturally from the moon." Rockwell Willis of San Francisco, a landscape architect to firms in San Francisco, recommends placing fixtures at least a foot away from the plant or architectural element they're meant to highlight to avoid harsh, unflattering "hot spots."

Such toed-down design lets us see a night scene the nighttime sky, notes Mr. Willis. Many municipalities are embracing the practice because it reduces light pollution and lessens the impact on birds, the bugs they eat and other fauna, said Mr. Willis. However, a landscape designer in Bedford, N.Y. "We can be impactful without being garish or feeling like we're in Las Vegas."

You may not need as many path lights as you think, for one thing. Mr. Richardson said one of the habitual mistakes homeowners make when they tackle lighting the outdoors is spacing path lights too closely. "It almost gives you a runway effect," he said, adding that you can reuse navigability without committing one dollar. "I try not to space [them] any closer than maybe 12 feet apart."

Another interior technology that has moved outdoors: dimming. "There are times when you may want outdoor lights brighter or dimmer for whatever reason," said Mr. Ruk. Perhaps you wish to bring the lights up slowly as the sun sets. He reports a growing demand for this flexibility. Similarly, multi-taple designers said the relevant law that many LEDs can be twinkled—even transformed into a rainbow of hues—from their sun-eyes using programming from Burton Home's remote control.

As with LEDs inside your home, color temperatures, or Kelvin ratings, matter. A bulb on the higher end of the Kelvin range, near 6500, will emit a cool, blue light. Lower Kelvin temperatures, or warmer, softer whites. For outdoor use, Dan Spiegel, who's also a founding partner and principal at Spigel Akira Workshop, advises selecting light bulbs with low color temperatures, around 2700 Kelvin.

Whether you hire professionals or do it yourself, Mr. Richardson recommends starting slowly. You can add extra lights over time. "Once you take the fixtures out of the packaging and stick it in the ground it gets harder to return." For her part, every time Mr. Walker pulls into her driveway at night, she appreciates the effort she's put into her lighting, she said, from the gazebo to the glow-guided path. "It just makes me feel like I live in a little jewel box."

**Worth Wiring**  
You won't need calling in a professional to hook up these three outdoor fixtures

Clockwise from above:  
Mastaro Outdoor Chandelier, from \$2,700, Neta Lighting, 646-475-9150; Hardy Island Low Voltage Path Light, \$158, lumens.com; Amigo LED Sconce, \$80, Sander & Co. US A, 512-620-2096