



Robert Webber offers advice on lighting design for the darker months and keeping installations running smoothly throughout winter

I hate to break it to you, but winter is just around the corner! It's one of our busiest times of year; my phone rings constantly with reports of lights not working and circuits tripping. Wet winters in England are our worst enemy for extinguishing lighting.

Winter is the time when you want effective, reliable lighting. For most of us, it's dark when we leave home and dark when we get back. My comfort is returning home to my family and seeing into the lounge, where a roaring fire and a nice glass of red are waiting for me.

Winter is a great time to show off key features in a garden, because there is little else to see. Bare trees can be lit to show the skeleton of structure and form – the bones that support its life through the summer. Sculptures that appear tired and dark can be illuminated to bring them back to life. Simple, functional lights become paramount when navigating the slippery leaves and dark steps.

So often in the summer, lighting design and installation just concentrates on the features. It forgets the practicalities of kids getting to the front door in winter and people putting the bins out on a Sunday night. It's one area that we cover in our three-point solution to lighting.

Function is number one on our list when we're meeting a new lighting challenge. There's no point spending thousands on lighting a water feature if you're not going to light the



A WORD ON WINTER

steps that lead there – you'll be much closer to nature than you envisaged when you slip over.

Here are some tips to help you get through winter with your lighting intact at the end of it:

- 1 Clean the lights.** Lights become covered in leaves and debris, which makes them far more susceptible to allowing water ingress. If a light is covered in damp leaves for more than 30 minutes, then it will start to allow the water in. All that money you spent is worthless if you don't maintain.
- 2 Lubricate.** This is an area that is often left high and dry. When you clean the light, apply a little grease to the thread of the barrel of the fitting, and to any screws that may be needed to access the lamp. I've seen countless expensive lights become non-serviceable because the screws have lacked grease and care and have fused themselves to the fitting. They then have to be cut out and replaced. This is a common issue with cheaper models – great on day one, in the recycling bin by day 101.
- 3 Replace.** So often, lamps are left until they blow before they are replaced. While normal incandescent lamps just blow and are gone, LEDs slowly lose their lumen output over time. Lumens are the measure of the actual light seen by the naked eye – it's so different to the science of older style lamps, which are measured in watts, the amount of power used to run the lamp. When an LED gets to 70% of its output – L-70 – it should be replaced. Most manufacturers measure this in hours, so they might say that a lamp will last for 3,000, 10,000 or even 100,000 hours. That's until not the day it blows –that's the time it will take for it to reach L-70.



- 4 Position.** It's so key to choose a lifelong position for a light. An IP rating is indicative to its position. IP means Ingress Protection; every light has one written on by British Standard. We only use IP68, the highest IP rating for garden lighting, which means they are submersible. Some installers might call that overkill, but that's one of the reasons we get recommended. Our lighting installations hardly ever fail due to water ingress.

Cast your mind back to a lighting installation that you may have been involved in over the last few years; how do you think it's doing now? At Scenic Lighting we build for the long term. It's what has earned us the highest accolades. We don't compromise to meet a budget, but we do have solutions for every budget.

ABOUT ROBERT WEBBER

Robert Webber is the founder of Scenic Lighting, a specialist exterior lighting company based in Berkshire. He designs and installs garden lighting throughout the UK and internationally. Robert can be contacted on rob@sceniclighting.com or via his mobile on 07766 051 000. www.sceniclighting.com