



Robert Webber advises on how to incorporate security lighting into your garden to deter burglars without compromising on ambience

Yes, it's that time of year again when we squeeze the whole family into the car and head off on holiday. We're looking forward to arcades and crabbing on the beach in rock pools – the great British holiday.

So, who's looking after your home while you're away? It's a known fact that an unoccupied property with poor lighting is a target for thieves. Last month there were 32,000 burglaries on UK properties reported to the police. That's a successful burglary just over every minute. After leaving a door open, the second biggest cause is poor or no security lighting in a vacant property.

Security lighting has come a long way since I was young, when we had a 1,000W floodlight on the shed. The lamp would blow every week and the sensor would trigger at the sight of a caterpillar. Luckily, we've moved on.

Your options as to how you apply security lighting are varied. You can still have floodlights placed up high that are triggered by movement within the garden. It's all LED these days, so an old 500W light has become a 30W LED – they're cheaper to run and won't burn a hole in your shed roof.

When we approach security we like to think outside the box. We seek to offer a solution that is sensitive to its environment but also effective when needed. After all, you don't want to light

LOCK DOWN SECURITY LIGHTING

your house like it's something out of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The placement of security lighting is very important. Like all functional light, it is always placed above and often high up, which eliminates anyone tampering with the lights to

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disable them. You then need to think about the trigger method to turn the light on. In most situations this will be a PIR sensor, which detects movement at night. It's imperative to place these correctly so they don't trigger too often and cause a nuisance, and that they sense the correct movement and body heat.

It's this sensor that forms the main interface in the garden and this is where good money needs to be spent. For us there is only one manufacturer and sensor we trust: Steinel. They offer a great range of sensors with varying degrees of angle so they can be positioned to look at the exact area you require. They're not triggered by nearby trees or shrubs moving

in the wind and they work on body mass and heat, so our smaller nocturnal friends won't set them off.

What's vital for you is to have a point of isolation where the security lighting can be turned off. Obviously this switch should be inside the house. I've been to many houses and installed garden lighting, only to know that the security lights flood the whole garden at night. It's important to have isolation for your enjoyment when you don't need that level of brightness.

We try and incorporate security into our designs. A classic way to achieve this is by moon lighting, placing a light high in a tree so it shines downwards through the canopy, creating a moonlight effect. Recently we experimented with a system where in normal operation the light would only come on at 30% of its brightness, and when a sensor at the front gate was triggered it would turn up to 100%. Light Symphony is a cost effective control system to help achieve this.

So, to know that your house is in safe hands when you're away, fit a system that you can depend on. The cost of a good security light and sensor is around £200. The average cost of a burglary is £2,500. You can do the maths.

ABOUT ROBERT WEBBER

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