

Enchanting illumination

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT NELSON

Imagine for a moment a performance of Cirque du Soleil with just a single, high-powered spotlight illuminating the stage. How much of the dramatic set and beautiful movement would be either lost in the shadows or overexposed in the glare? The same notion applies to your outdoor lighting.

“An outdoor lighting system that showcases the best of your landscape isn’t as simple as a few up-lit trees or rock cuts,” says James Solecki, owner of Integra Bespoke Lighting Systems. “Good lighting – so good that you hardly notice it’s there – makes a huge difference in the enjoyment of your property.”

Set the stage

Your cottage is a work of art: beautifully designed with every detail painstakingly considered, both inside and out. Windows are positioned to maximize the view, trees are pruned to enhance sightlines to the lake, meandering paths lead to stunning vistas, and gardens are planted for visual enjoyment.

And then at night, your outdoor view goes black.

“There are three primary aspects to outdoor lighting,” says James, “beauty, safety and security.” Each is relatively easy to attain on its own, but bringing them all together to gently enhance the overall ambience of a property is truly an art form. The main difference between an average lighting system and one that evokes an emotional response is found in the talent and experience of the designer. “With all of the attention paid to making the rest of your property perfect, outdoor lighting shouldn’t be an afterthought.”

Ethereal effect

“You should see the effect, not the source” says James. Light fixtures shouldn’t draw attention to themselves. Instead, they and the light they emit should blend seamlessly with the landscape, highlighting both the natural and the built beauty of your property.

James draws on his background in theatrical lighting to guide the eye with dramatic effect. It’s a bit like well-executed sleight of hand – you know you’re viewing something spectacular, you’re just not quite sure how it’s been achieved. But when attempted by clumsy hands, the trick is exposed and the magic is lost.

Bespoke is best

That’s why it’s important to have a design professional craft a system that is customized for you – your lifestyle, your taste and the unique aspects of your property.

“I start with a consultation to understand your needs and expectations,” explains James, who has installed more than 500 systems in Integra’s 15 years of business. “From the moment I step onto your property, I’m formulating a vision based on the landscape, architecture and location. No two properties are alike but I’ve never met a landscape that I couldn’t improve with the right lighting.”

You didn’t build a cookie-cutter cottage, so don’t rely on an out-of-the-box solution to show it in its best light. A bespoke lighting system, one that’s distinctively yours, provides the finishing touch to your property that will leave you and your guests enchanted. **DS**

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