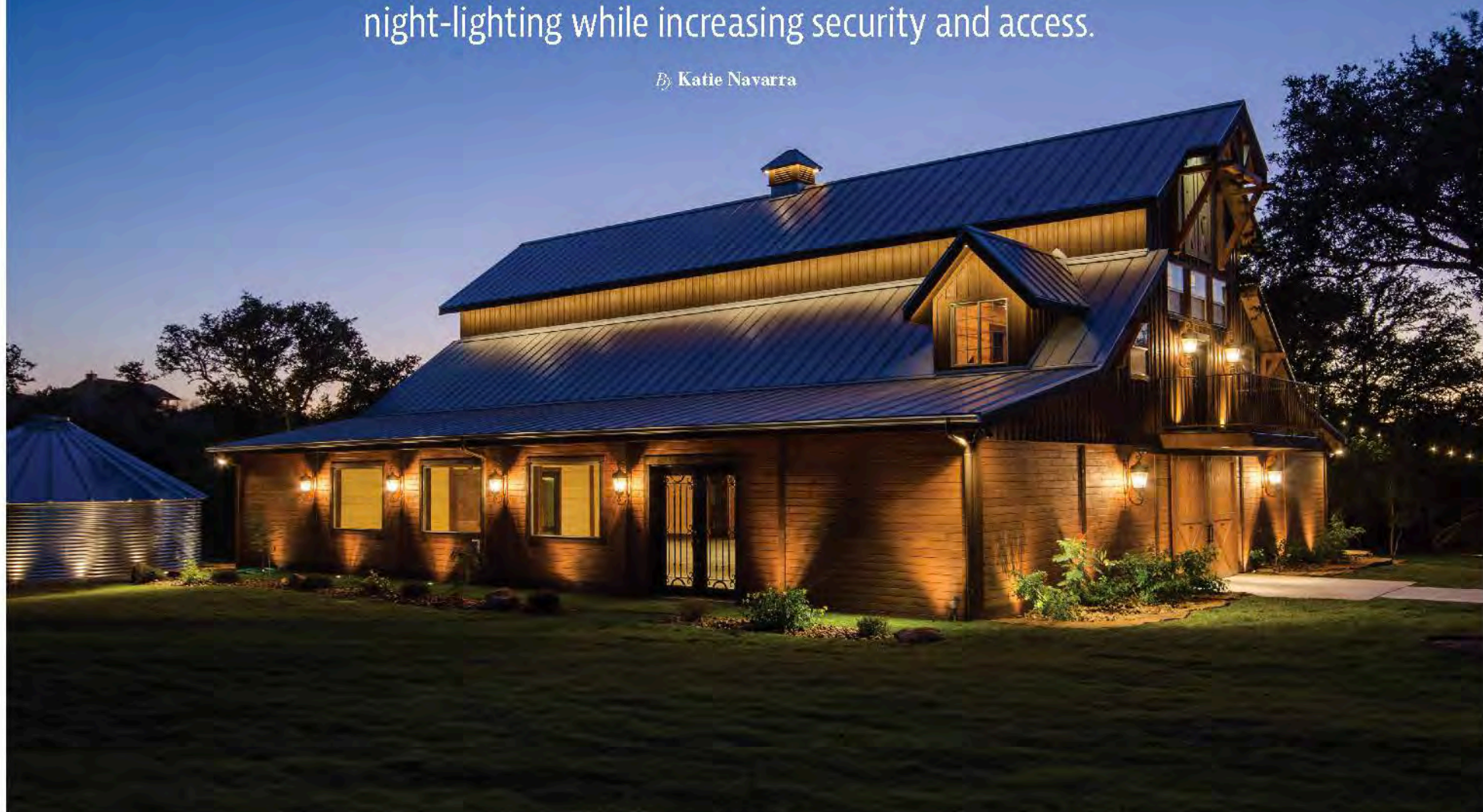


NIGHT LIGHTS

Illuminate your stable and enjoy the glow of subtle night-lighting while increasing security and access.

By Katie Navarra



Whether you have a commercial boarding stable full of colorful horses or a handful of your own beloved Paint partners, landscape lighting allows you to take enjoyment of your barn and surrounding property to a whole new level long after the sun sinks below the horizon.

But outdoor lighting adds more than ambience and atmosphere; it also offers added safety, security and functionality.

The key to outdoor lighting is knowing what features to emphasize, how to highlight those areas and where to place the fixtures so they disappear into the surrounding landscape. With advice from landscape architects and a landscape lighting specialist, you can illuminate your landscape and escape to your stable around the clock.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DENISE DEAN (LIGHTING BY TEXAS OUTDOOR LIGHTING)

Light It Up

Well-planned, strategically placed outdoor lighting is both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Joel Mayor, founder of Texas Outdoor Lighting in Austin, notes that outdoor lighting has the potential to increase the perceived value of a property by nearly 20 percent.

"We're seeing more and more property listings showing the front of the house at night with the dramatic lighting on," he said. "I think the lighting for any stable property would be similar."

Heather Lewis, a principal partner at Animal Arts in Boulder, Colorado, loves giving stables a welcoming, home-like, safe feeling through night lighting.

"Dark stables might feel scary and unwelcoming. Lighting can do a lot to make riders and boarders feel more at home," she said. "Light also keeps away varmints, such as raccoons and rats, that prefer to move around in the dark."

Joe Martinolich of J Martinolich Architect PLLC in Lexington, Kentucky, says landscape lighting should guide visitors toward the barn.

"It's not unusual for people to be at the barn before dawn or after dusk, and because barns are in rural areas, there is not a lot of ambient light from other sources," Joe said.

John Blackburn, president and senior principal at Blackburn Architects, P.C., in Washington, D.C., approaches projects with security and access in mind, considering how to achieve those goals while highlighting a unique or favorite feature of the farm.

"That might be using uplights to create a glow in skylights, or it might be an interesting tree or the cupola of the barn," he said. "Ultimately, the goal is to create something aesthetically pleasing that adds value to the property."

Shine the Light

Landscape lighting designers speak in terms of fixtures and lamps. Fixtures, similar to the ones hanging inside your home, hold the lamp. The lamp is the equivalent of a light bulb. Fixtures and lamps are used for three basic techniques: downlighting, uplighting and path lighting. Each serves a purpose and creates a different effect.

A fixture placed above an object with the angle of light pointing down illuminates what is below it—the result is a soft, cool light that mimics moonlight. Used in shorter bushes and trees around a barn, the light source nearly disappears and visitors only notice the residual glow. Down-



lighting is a popular choice because of its practicality and environmentally friendly features.

"Downlighting on the outside of buildings is best because it will not contribute to light pollution," Heather said. "It's more practical because the lamp is not as likely to collect dust and debris."

Conversely, uplighting is a design approach that places a fixture below the object to be lit, with the angle of light directed upwards. It's often used to light building façades or to silhouette.

Because uplights are often installed at ground level, they can create tripping hazards or be easily broken by equipment or horses. Joel chooses "in-grade" uplights—those installed even with the ground—and says they often require less maintenance for stables.

"These fixtures are flush with the ground and can be stepped on or even driven over by most equipment," he said. "This provides a clearer look with less maintenance and still gives a dramatic effect."

The third type of outdoor lighting is path lighting. These fixtures can be basic or more elaborate and decorative. In public places and private homes, they are often placed along the edges of walkways to help guide people along the path without tripping. Because the circle of light from each fixture looks small, it can be tempting to place them close together; designers, however, avoid a runway look by leaving adequate space between each fixture.

"There are a variety of wonderful path lights, from simple residential-style lighting fixtures to commercial options, which come in many

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forms,” Heather said. “We prefer commercial fixtures for paths to and from barns because they will be less likely to be broken and destroyed by heavy foot traffic or snow removal.”

Finding a Focus

Barns are typically large, symmetrical buildings, which naturally makes them a good fit for outdoor lighting.

“Most barns have large doors. Exterior lights should be located near the doors for practical reasons and also because this creates a sense of welcoming,” Heather said.

Dutch doors, common in many barns, provide an ideal feature to highlight with lighting.

“Dutch doors give a rhythm to overall barn design, and highlighting them shares that same rhythm,” John said. “Downlighting each door creates a scalloped look.”

Once the façade and main entryways are lit, focus on unique aspects of your barn, such as ornate windows, barn doors, the cupola and even gardens or exterior hardscapes.

“Uplights on the inside of a barn with skylights create a bouncing effect that creates a glow,” John said. “It’s important to keep birds from nesting up there and preventing other debris from settling to avoid a fire.”

It doesn’t take many fixtures to make a big impact with landscape lighting. On residential

systems with a few fixtures, Joel estimates the cost can be as little as \$0.30 nightly to run the entire system. On an annual basis, Heather estimates a lighting system for a barn might add up to a few hundred dollars.

LED lamps have greatly reduced the electrical and maintenance requirements of outdoor lighting systems.

“LED fixtures and lamps cost a little more up front, but they pay for themselves over time,” John said. “A LED lamp also produces a cooler light, reducing the risk of fire.”

Light the Night

Outdoor lighting is usually 120 or 240 volt, referred to as high voltage, or 12 volt, known as low voltage. High-voltage systems should only be installed by licensed electricians for safety reasons, but low-voltage systems can often be installed by the property owner—they’re not strong enough to shock adults, children or pets.

“There are almost no advantages of 120 volt systems over 12 volt systems now because LED technology has come so far in the last few years,” Joel said.

Most home improvement or garden stores sell the components for low-voltage systems. Transformers—the receptacles that provide power to the lights—as well as wire, fixtures and lamps are readily available. Those sold at big



box stores, however, are not as rugged as those labeled as professional- or contractor-grade.


"I can't tell you how many we have pulled out of properties to replace them with more commercial-grade fixtures," Joel said.

Instead, he encourages do-it-yourselfers to purchase professional-grade systems online. You get what you pay for: professional-grade components are often more expensive upfront, but they're designed to last longer.

Countless qualified architects and landscape lighting designers are available to help create perfect lighting solutions for your farm. The Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals can also connect you with designers across the United States and Canada.

Remember to consider the impact added lighting might have on the horses that call the barn home.

"Think about the lighting's effect on your horses," Heather said. "Don't light too brightly around the horses' stalls, or you could disrupt their circadian rhythms."

Landscape lighting around your barn holds many positives, however—and when your barn seems like your second home, why not take the opportunity to show it off with stylish and functional lighting accents? A world of possibilities as wide as the night sky are at your fingertips to add hours of enjoyment to your home away from home. 

Flip the Switch

Before tackling your own outdoor-lighting project, heed some expert advice.

Know what's underground before digging trenches.

Call 811 from anywhere in the country a few days before digging. Utility companies with facilities in the area of your dig site will be notified about your intent to dig, and each affected company will send a locator to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines. You can learn more at call811.com. This helps you avoid causing damage, outages or serious injury, Joe says.

Check your local codes.

Know local requirements that might affect your lighting plans.

"Some places are concerned with light pollution and have strict guidelines. It usually pertains to large facilities, like soccer fields and baseball diamonds, but if you're trying to light an outdoor arena, it might fall into the same category," John said.

Strategically plan fixture placement.

Fixture location is important for creating a specific effect, but fixtures should not be placed in areas where horses or equipment can come in contact with them.

"Set the landscape lights far enough away from the edges of paths that they don't get broken," Heather said.

Buy quality fixtures.

"Only buy UL-rated light fixtures, and don't try to rig a system together," John cautioned.

UL is a global independent safety science company that helps promote safe living and working environments. According to ul.com, "a UL listing means that UL has tested representative samples of the product and determined that it meets UL's requirements. These requirements are based primarily on UL's published and nationally recognized standards for safety."