

Our home and interiors guru, RUTH CORBETT, answers your questions on how to add value to your home. Email Ruth at readers@cedarcom.co.uk

Dear Ruth,

Having decided to overhaul the ancient electrics in our house, we're excited about the chance to install a mix of practical and atmospheric lighting solutions. We've never got this quite right in the past. Any tips?



'Lighting has the ability to create theatre, elegance and magic at the touch of a button'

Lighting is one of the most important elements in any interior and the most successful schemes are those tackled in the early stages of a redesign. So hurrah! Your timing is perfect.

Having invested time, money and effort on an interior, it makes sense to get it looking its best. Lighting can do this for you, but the right solution is as personal as choosing a paint colour, so it is worth remembering, when in doubt, to keep it simple. The simplest lighting schemes are often the most effective if they're properly executed.

Good lighting should enhance your home, providing atmosphere and increasing the sense of space. 'It's really not necessary to spend a fortune on numerous circuits and expensive gadgetry,' says Sally Storey, Design Director of John Cullen Lighting. 'I use a lot of portable, plug-in solutions to create pockets of light in dark corners and simple click-trays to back light pictures and works of art.'

So where to begin? Ideally light should come from more than one source and direction; each room will require task lighting, ambient or general lighting, natural lighting and feature lighting. 'The mood must be balanced to create a subtle combination of these different lighting effects, while still emphasising the interior style of the space,' says Storey. 'The perfect solution is to conceal the source of the light so that the space seems to be lit as if by magic.'

Of course, decorative lighting needs to be part of the scheme too - and should one go for halogen, fluorescent or incandescent? It's a vast topic and new enthusiasts would do well to attend a lighting design clinic to learn about how to create a unique, creative yet functional space. Light IQ runs one such course. Its Design Director, Rebecca Weir, says

that light has the ability to transform a space, creating theatre, elegance and magic at the touch of a button. Her clinics focus on the kitchen, bathroom and garden, and reveal tricks of the trade and inspirational techniques to enable us to successfully implement our own schemes. 'Creating effective lighting is about identifying what activities take place where and applying the appropriate light source,' says Weir. 'Once you have a general idea of the look you'd like, consider your décor and then choose a combination of the four layers of light (general, task, feature and natural) that will give the space a luxurious glow.'

Seasonal lighting is becoming popular too, especially now that relatively inexpensive lighting options can be swapped and changed to suit. 'In the winter months, I like to accentuate paintings and the centre of a coffee table with low-glare, directional, recessed down-lights,' says Storey. 'Try lighting shelves with an energy-efficient LED strip and choose a simple up light, which, when hidden behind a piece of furniture, can brighten a shadowy recess or up light a fireplace.'

In the summer make the most of any outdoor space. 'Brighten up dark corners with energy efficient pathway lanterns. Or introduce clusters of decorative pendant lights hanging from trees, which will add a magical touch to any garden.'

Once the house is beautifully lit, you're bound to wonder if your financial outlay can be recouped. 'Good lighting will always enable a homeowner to make their house and garden more attractive, and therefore more sellable,' says Storey. 'But do make sure you show potential buyers around after dark so you can best show off this canny investment.' ■
John Cullen Lighting, (020) 7371 5400, www.johncullenlighting.co.uk; Light IQ, (020) 8749 1900, www.lightiq.com

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