

Home & Garden

March 2023

A Special Supplement to

The Expositor



Red-Letter Day

Horticulturalist Donna Fare explains how the 2022 winter freeze will affect landscaping this spring.

Home Canning Principles

UT Extension office provides tips for safely canning your garden vegetables.



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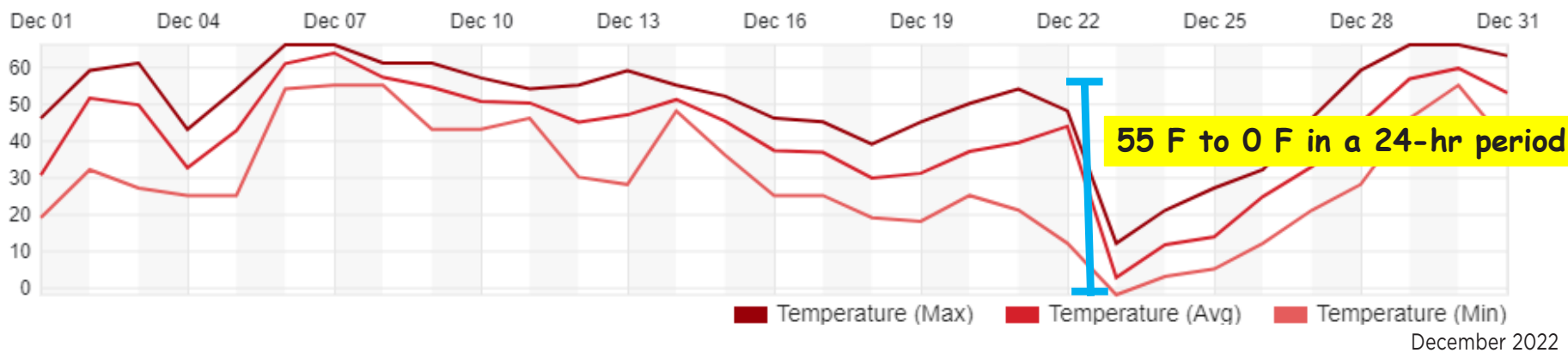
10 Key Questions to ask your contractor

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Did you know?

Though plants might not seem like the first thing individuals think of when they ponder long-term investments, perennials can be just that. The home and garden experts at HGTV note that some perennials can live for a very long time. For example, according to HGTV, the colorful flowering plant peony, despite a blooming season that usually lasts just seven to 10 days, has been known to survive for 70 to 100 years. Hostas are another popular perennial because they require little maintenance, and that extra free time can add up over the course of the hosta’s life, which can exceed 15 years. Long-living perennials are not necessarily unusual, but gardeners should know that many perennials, and particularly those characterized as “short-lived,” tend to live around three years.





December 2022

Winter freeze may cause problems with landscaping

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

Along with sparkling lights and trimmed trees and presents and Christmas Spirit, December 2022 brought another surprise - what the nursery industry calls a Red-Letter Day - a 24-hour period in which temperatures dropped 55 degrees.

Donna Fare, a horticulturist who lives in Sparta, explained the Red-Letter Day will affect field nurseries, landscapers, and even home landscaping moving forward into the spring.

"Brown foliage on plants is not a good sign," she said. "It means there wasn't enough water in the plants to push the leaves off when the December freeze happened."

She went on to point out other signs of poor plant health stemming from the rapid drop in temperatures and local vegetation not having adequate time to go through their usual self-preserving systems that protect their stems and future growth through the winter months.

"Transport systems in plants suffer the most when something like this happens. You will see bark split in the trunk, usually on the southwest side of a tree that's the last side of the tree that gets sunlight," she explained. "But busted bark around the stem is more detrimental than anything."

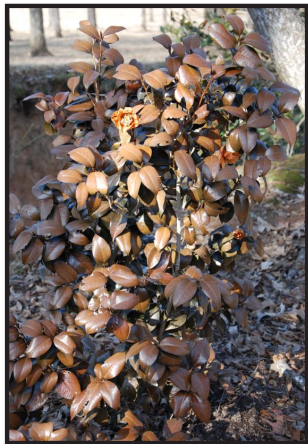
According to Fare, this year's freeze could put a serious strain on the nursery industry in the area. She recalled that in 2007 there was a freeze - something referred to as the \$2 billion nursery industry freeze - that significantly decreased the number of suppliers in the country.

"Prior to the 2007 freeze, there were 900 certified growers registered with the Department of Agriculture," she

What happens from a rapid temperature drop?

Visually

- Foliage turns brown
- Foliage defoliates
- Trunk cracks



What happens now from a rapid temperature drop?

Physiologically

- Stems could be desiccated
- Stem cells could be ruptured
- Main trunk vascular system could be dead



WINTER FREEZE

CONTINUED FROM 3

said. "Now there are somewhere near only 400."

With the current winter's freeze, Fare said it is right to be concerned with the availability of plants from nurseries - locally or shipped - and that those in the landscaping business may be in for a few tough years.

"I would be concerned about buying any plants this year," she said, explaining that what might look like a healthy plant on the inside could have significant damage and be slowly dying on the inside. "It will be summer before

we have plants that are ready to be shipped to local stores and nurseries where we shop, and that is well past the opportune time for planting. Anything shipped early will have gone through the freeze and may not be as healthy as you would hope when spending money on your landscaping."

For those who are looking at the landscaping - the trees, bushes, annuals - that adorn their own homes, lawns, and properties - Fare warned about being aggressive.

"Be patient," she warned, adding that the final freeze of the year usually takes

place in early April. "Wait until March, maybe even April, to begin pruning. You should be able to determine what's dead and what is salvageable."

She also warned about spreading disease among plants in a time like this and said that she highly recommends sanitizing clippers after cutting each plant.

"Just dip them in a mix of chlorine and water," she said. "Plant disease spreads so easily."

She also offered hope for those home gardeners who are finding green stems and leaves on their plants and bushes.

"They will come back with a vengeance as long as they are getting plenty of water," she said, again reminding that sudden drop in temperatures the freeze stole the water from the plants as the 55-degree early December days hadn't indicated to the plants that they needed to begin storing any before the drop that took them to 0 in a single day. "Use buckets to water this year not watering cans. Pour that water in the soil around those bushes and trees and plants, if they made it through, they are going to need all the water we can get to them."

Spring freeze 2007 - Easter Freeze - 2 Billion \$\$ freeze

March 2007 was unseasonably mild. Plants started leafing out, farmers planted some crops early Temp drop to low 20s, April 6-9, Easter Sunday, April 8

Across SE, the freeze led to 1,237 record low temp. 1000 counties, 24 states declared federal disaster areas

- Peach production down 79 %
- Apples dropped by 85 %
- Strawberry crops dropped 70 %



Frost Dates for Sparta, TN

April 2023							
No.	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
13							1
14	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
17	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
18	30						

October 2023							
No.	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
40	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
42	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
43	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
44	29	30	31				

Light Freeze
29° to 32°F - tender plants are killed

Moderate freeze
25° to 28°F - widely destructive to most vegetation

Severe freeze
24°F - heavy damage to most garden plants

2007 Freeze - Nursery Production in Tenn

Tremendous impact

Many nurseries completely shut down especially the smaller nurseries
Affected field nurseries and container nurseries
Prior to 2007 over 900 certified growers in Tenn, now around 400



Make UT Extension your first stop for lawn and gardening info

It's spring and folks are ready to get out in their yards. As you head outdoors, do you need information about lawn pests, fertilizing roses, gardening techniques or food safety for outdoor barbeques? Chances are University of Tennessee Extension can help - usually for free.

A wealth of information is available to lawn and garden enthusiasts through your local county UT Extension office or directly from the UT Extension publication page at <http://utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/> Search for or click on a topic of interest and browse through the available publications. Topics run the gamut from improving home landscapes, lawn and garden fertilization and pests, choosing fruit trees and canning the future produce from your garden. Most publications can be downloaded for free. If you don't have a computer or printer available, contact the White County UT Extension office at 836-3348.



UT Extension operates in each of Tennessee's 95 counties as the off-campus division of the UT Institute of Agriculture.

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Time to start preparing for your spring garden

Now that the forecast is for plenty of moisture and some warming days, it's time to start gardening! Many gardeners feel that if they don't plant their potatoes by St. Patrick's Day then they have failed! Well, the truth is that you can't go just by the calendar when it comes to starting your spring garden. You have to pay more attention to the weather and the soil. Soils are surprisingly wet and cool this year. Last weeks warm weather brought soil temperatures up, but cooler weather this week could slow that down. Soil moisture is a concern whether it is wet or dry. Wet soils are a concern because working wet soils will create a lot of problems in the way of clods that will haunt you all season long. Cool soils can cause problems from slow emergence of garden crops. Plants that are slow to emerge will be at greater risk to disease and insect problems. Transplanting tender crops, such as tomatoes, into soils that are too cool will also shock them severely enough that you will delay fruit set later on in the summer.

If you didn't work your garden plot last fall, or in late winter before some of the rains, you may have to wait a while before it is dry enough to till. Soil temperatures are still relatively cool.



With slightly cooler weather now, those temperatures will stay flat, or rise very slowly, for the next several days. While spring is just around the corner, our average last frost date is still almost four weeks away and our frost free date isn't until about Mother's Day. So don't be in a hurry, we're just at the start of the season.

What can you be planting in your vegetable garden right now? For the month

of March or the first week in April think of root crops and cabbages. Specifically, on the root crops, potatoes, radish, onions (sets or plants), turnips, and beets. One of the biggest mistakes that most gardeners make is planting too deep, especially in cool soils. The deeper soil is going to be slower to warm. Plant potatoes just a couple of inches deep. Then as they grow, hill them up to protect the developing tubers from scald. Potatoes

can be planted clear into mid April and then again in early July for a fall crop. The other root crops need to be planted fairly shallow. One half inch is plenty deep enough.

Next, think leaf crops and cabbages or cole crops. Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, endive, spinach and lettuce can all be planted right now. In the case of lettuce, it's nice to make sequential plantings about 3 to 4 weeks apart to spread out your fresh lettuce season. Lettuce is a small seed that needs to be planted fairly shallow, less than one half inch. Spinach is a larger seed than can go in up to one inch deep. Remember that you need to have fine soil that will assure good seed to soil contact. Protect them from southwest winds and hot afternoon sun, which can scald tender young transplants.

Finally, we need some peas to go with those new potatoes! Plant these now and plant them about 1 to 1 1/2 inches deep. A lot of gardeners like to mulch their garden, but applying mulch now will slow soil warm-up and retard development of young plants. Let the soil warm up more before mulching. Nothing beats fresh vegetables from your garden, and now is the time to prepare for planting!



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The role of nature in home design in the years ahead

Outdoor living spaces were prioritized during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when public gatherings were greatly limited and individuals were urged to stay home as much as possible. Such demands have had a ripple effect on various industries, including home design. According to a survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute in collaboration with Pro Builder, 58 percent of the more than 300 residential architects, designers and design-minded builders who participated said connection to the outdoors/nature will be an important influence on their design choices in the years to come. In addition, 45 percent of respondents indicated increased attention will be afforded to outdoor entertaining spaces.

So what might the outdoor spaces of homes built in the not-so-distant future look like? Respondents to the survey anticipated a growing demand for various built-in outdoor features, including:

- Firepits or fireplaces
- Outdoor kitchens
- Gazebos or pergolas
- Pools
- Spas or hot tubs

Though trends and consumer demands are ever-shifting, architects and designers are anticipating that future homeowners will want more developed outdoor living spaces and greater access to nature, which is something current homeowners can keep in mind when renovating their properties.



TRENDS. Architects and designers are anticipating that future homeowners will want more developed outdoor living spaces and greater access to nature

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Learn the principles of home canning

WHITE COUNTY UT EXTENSION OFFICE

WHY CAN FOODS?

Canning can be a safe and economical way to preserve quality food at home. Disregarding the value of your labor, canning homegrown food may save you half the cost of buying commercially canned food. Canning favorite and special products to be enjoyed by family and friends is a fulfilling experience and a source of pride for many people. Many vegetables begin losing some of their vitamins when harvested. Nearly half the vitamins may be lost within a few days unless the fresh produce is cooled or preserved. Within 1 to 2 weeks, even refrigerated produce loses half or more of some of its vitamins. The heating process during canning destroys from one-third to one-half of vitamins A and C, thiamin, and riboflavin. Once canned, additional losses of these sensitive vitamins are from 5 to 20 percent each year. The amounts of other vitamins, however, are only slightly lower in canned compared with fresh food. If vegetables are handled properly and canned promptly after harvest, they can be more nutritious than fresh produce sold in local stores. The advantages of home canning are lost when you start with poor quality fresh foods; when jars fail to seal properly; when food spoils; and when flavors, texture, color, and nutrients deteriorate during prolonged storage. The information and guides that follow explain many of these problems and recommend ways to minimize them.

ENSURING HIGH-QUALITY CANNED FOODS

Begin with good-quality fresh foods suitable for canning. Quality varies among varieties of fruits and vegetables. Many

county Extension offices can recommend varieties best suited for canning. Examine food carefully for freshness and wholesomeness. Discard diseased and moldy food. Trim small diseased lesions or spots from food. Can fruits and vegetables picked from your garden or purchased from nearby producers when the products are at their peak of quality—within 6 to 12 hours after harvest for most vegetables. For best quality, apricots, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums should be ripened 1 or more days between harvest and canning. If you must delay the canning of other fresh produce, keep it in a shady, cool place. Fresh home-slaughtered red meats and poultry should be chilled and canned without delay. Do not can meat from sickly or diseased animals. Ice fish and seafoods after harvest, eviscerate immediately, and can them within 2 days.

RECOMMENDED CANNERS

Equipment for heat-processing home-canned food is of two main types—boiling water canners and pressure canners. Low-acid foods must be processed in a pressure canner to be free of botulism risks. Although pressure canners may also be used for processing acid foods, boiling water canners are recommended for this purpose because they are faster. A pressure canner would require from 55 to 100 minutes to process a load of jars; while the total time for processing most acid foods in boiling water varies from 25 to 60 minutes. A boiling-water canner loaded with filled jars requires about 20 to 30 minutes of heating before its water begins to boil. A loaded pressure canner requires about 12 to 15 minutes of heating before it begins to vent; another 10 minutes to vent the canner; another 5 minutes to pressurize

the canner; another 8 to 10 minutes to process the acid food; and, finally, another 20 to 60 minutes to cool the canner before removing jars.

SELECTING THE CORRECT PROCESSING TIME

When canning in boiling water, more processing time is needed for most raw-packed foods and for quart jars than is needed for hot-packed foods and pint jars.

To destroy microorganisms in acid foods processed in a boiling-water canner, you must:

- Process jars for the correct number of minutes in boiling water.
- Cool the jars at room temperature.

The food may spoil if you fail to add process time for lower boiling-water temperatures at altitudes above 1,000 feet, process for fewer minutes than specified, or cool jars in cold water. Principles of Home Canning 11-23

To destroy microorganisms in low-acid foods processed with a pressure canner, you must:

- Process the jars using the correct time and pressure specified for your altitude.
- Allow canner to cool at room temperature until it is completely depressurized.

The food may spoil if you fail to select the proper process times for specific altitudes, fail to exhaust canners properly, process at lower pressure than specified, process for fewer minutes than specified, or cool the canner with water.

COOLING JARS

When you remove hot jars from a canner, do not retighten their jar lids. Retightening of hot lids may cut through the gasket and cause seal failures. Cool the jars at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours. Jars may be cooled on racks or towels to minimize heat damage to counters. The food

level and liquid volume of raw-packed jars will be noticeably lower after cooling. Air is exhausted during processing and food shrinks. If a jar loses excessive liquid during processing, do not open it to add more liquid. Check for sealed lids as described below

TESTING JAR SEALS

After cooling jars for 12 to 24 hours, remove the screw bands and test seals with one of the following options:

Option 1. Press the middle of the lid with a finger or thumb. If the lid springs up when you release your finger, the lid is unsealed.

Option 2. Tap the lid with the bottom of a teaspoon. If it makes a dull sound, the lid is not sealed. If food is in contact with the underside of the lid, it will also cause a dull sound. If the jar is sealed correctly, it will make a ringing, high-pitched sound.

Option 3. Hold the jar at eye level and look across the lid. The lid should be concave (curved down slightly in the center). If center of the lid is either flat or bulging, it may not be sealed.

STORING CANNED FOODS

Label and date the jars and store them in a clean, cool, dark, dry place. Do not store jars above 95°F or near hot pipes, a range, a furnace, under a sink, in an uninsulated attic, or in direct sunlight. Under these conditions, food will lose quality in a few weeks or months and may spoil. Dampness may corrode metal lids, break seals, and allow recontamination and spoilage.

Canning Classes will begin in April here in White County.

Contact Mallory Christian at the Extension Office with any questions.

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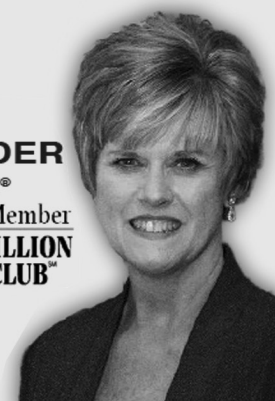


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Tips to pick the right plants for your landscape

Each year, gardening enthusiasts anxiously await the arrival of spring. Spring is a great season to plant new flowers, plants, grasses, and trees, making it a popular time of year to spend sunny days out in the yard.

Veteran gardeners may know their landscapes well and be able to pick the right plants on their own. Novices may need a little help as they look to give their landscapes a whole new look. The following are some helpful tips to help homeowners pick the right plants for their landscapes.

- Conduct a site evaluation. A colorful landscape featuring an array of plants and flowers can be eye-catching and add curb appeal to a property. However, where plants will be planted is a significant variable that must be considered before homeowners choose what to plant. The Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that site evaluation is the first step when picking plants. A number of factors must be evaluated, including light availability; water availability; exposure to the elements, including wind and extreme temperatures; and competition from existing vegetation, among other things. Document these variables prior to picking plants. For example, take note of the area you plan to plant to see if it is full sun or partial shade, and then pick plants whose growing conditions align with those you observe.



MAINTENANCE. Certain plants may require a considerable amount of pruning in order to create and maintain the look homeowners desire. Individuals must be willing to invest the time and effort necessary to maintain new plantings that require such diligence.

- Look at more than looks. Aesthetic appeal might be what homeowners most desire from their landscapes, but that appeal is only achieved when the right plants are chosen for a space. If the wrong plants are chosen, they're unlikely

to thrive or they could threaten existing vegetation, thus compromising the overall appeal of the property. Native plants can often handle local weather conditions, so prioritize natives over more exotic plants whose key attribute is aes-

thetic appeal. If jaw-dropping aesthetic appeal is your top priority, speak with a local landscaping professional about which natives can provide that without compromising surrounding vegetation.

- Consider maintenance prior to planting. Maintenance is another variable gardeners must consider. Newly planted trees may require substantial watering until they've fully established their roots, and some homeowners may not have time for that. In addition, certain plants may require a considerable amount of pruning in order to create and maintain the look homeowners desire. Individuals must be willing to invest the time and effort necessary to maintain new plantings that require such diligence. If not, look for plants that don't require much maintenance while keeping in mind that even low-maintenance plants still require some effort and attention.

- Consider local wildlife. If your lawn is routinely visited by local wildlife, then look for plants that won't look like a meal to these welcome, if uninvited, guests. For example, if you routinely see deer lounging around in your backyard, look for deer-resistant plants. This is a good way to protect your investment, of both time and money, and ensure minimal wildlife traffic through your newly landscaped yard.

Spring gardens are awe-inspiring, especially when homeowners embrace various strategies for successful planting.

Key questions to ask your renovation contractor

Individuals looking to renovate their homes typically reach out to a number of professionals for estimates before choosing a contractor. Once that decision has been made, it's customary to sign a contract to ensure all parties are protected during and after the work.

A renovation contract outlines the details of a remodeling job. The construction company or the general contractor will create this legal document, which will list the steps of the job and how issues will be resolved should problems arise. Prior to signing a contract, however, homeowners should engage in a conversation with the contractor and ask key questions.

- How long have you been in business? Verify the information that the contrac-

tor and/or company provides by doing a search with the Better Business Bureau and perusing online reviews to confirm the company is dependable.

- Are you independently owned? Some companies are independently owned businesses while others are franchises. Franchised businesses may have to follow a strict set of rules, while independent contractors may have more leeway in terms of policies.

- What is your licence number? Obtain the licensure information as well as the contractor's insurance details. A contractor's general liability insurance protects your home and property in the event of an accident.

- Are you familiar with local building codes? Check to see if the contractor has

worked in the area before, and if he or she is familiar with the permit process. Make sure a contract documents who will be securing the permits.

- How will the project be supervised? Some contractors sub-contract out the work and may only stop by to check on progress. Understand how often those drop-ins will take place, and how to get in touch with the person in charge should a problem arise.

- Is there a warranty? Certain contractors will stand behind their work for a period of time, even coming to make repairs if there are any issues. Check to see if a warranty policy is in place.

- What is the policy for home protection and clean-up? You'll want to ensure the rest of your home doesn't become

damaged or soiled due to the construction. Have the contractor spell out plans for mitigating mess during demolition, and whether the construction company will be responsible for removing the debris.

- What is the final price? One of the more important questions to ask is if the price stated on the contract will be the final price, or should incidentals be expected if issues are unearthed during construction? Some contractors may need to tack on charges for extra materials, and that can stretch homeowners' budgets.

It's important to touch base with the contractor and ask key questions about the project, which will be reflected on the contract both parties eventually sign.

What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF LANDSCAPE LIGHTING?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that's usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it's easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

IS LANDSCAPE LIGHTING A JOB A DIYER CAN HANDLE?

Many homeowners consider a do-it-yourself approach when pondering a potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off working with a profes-



sional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

HOW MUCH LIGHTING IS NECESSARY?

The amount of lighting homeowners want to install is up to them. If the home currently has little or no landscape lighting, a consultation with a professional can help to determine how much lighting to install and where to install it. When discussing landscape lighting, homeowners may want to inquire about dimmers. Dimmers can increase or decrease lighting depending on the situation. For example, homeowners may want a little extra light during a party, but less when relaxing alone outside at night. Dimmers allow homeowners to adjust as necessary.

Landscape lighting is a popular home renovation trend. Homeowners considering adding landscape lighting to their property are urged to work with a skilled professional to devise and install a set-up that makes their homes more appealing at night. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it

DIY? The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it



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