



LIT
OUTDOOR LIGHTING

HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

— FOR HOMES THAT ENTERTAIN

The Outdoor Living *Lighting* Guide.

Design principles for turning your patio, pool, and yard into the most-used space in your home — after dark, every night of the year.

BY LIT OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Family-owned, Covington-based. Designing outdoor living experiences across the Northshore since 2021.

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Your outdoor space is one of the most valuable rooms in your *home*.

Here in Louisiana, you get nine or ten usable months of outdoor living every year — the rest of the country is lucky to get five. That's not a minor detail. It means your patio gets twice the use of the same space anywhere else.

But most outdoor spaces stop working the moment the sun goes down. Everyone heads back inside, not because the night is over, but because the space has nothing left to offer. A single overhead floodlight isn't ambiance — it's an airport tarmac with chairs.

This guide is about what it takes to design an outdoor living space that actually comes alive after dark. Where dinner runs until 10. Where the pool glows. Where the patio feels like the best room in the house. Where you use your home the way you imagined when you bought it.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

Homeowners who already have outdoor spaces they love — patios, pools, gardens, outdoor kitchens — and want those spaces to work just as beautifully at 9pm as they do at noon. If you're already planning serious outdoor living, this is for you.

Eight chapters on *outdoor living.*

The design language we use when a home is built for entertaining — and the principles behind every system that makes a backyard feel like it was finished on purpose.

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The shift: from backyard to outdoor *living room*.

Ten years ago, a backyard was grass, maybe a deck, and a hose. Today, outdoor spaces are outdoor *rooms* — with kitchens, lounges, dining areas, pools, fire features, and dedicated zones for entertaining.

Every industry built around outdoor living has grown dramatically in the past decade: outdoor kitchens, pool construction, hardscape, pergolas, louvered roofs, landscape design. Homeowners are investing five and six figures in transforming their yards into true extensions of the home.

But one thing has mostly been left behind: **the lighting plan**. Most of these gorgeous outdoor living spaces still rely on a single harsh floodlight mounted under the eave — or, worse, the neighbor's security light leaking over the fence. The space looks incredible at 4pm. By 8pm, it's unusable.

Why lighting has become the finishing layer

Because without it, the investment in the rest of the space only pays off during daylight hours — a fraction of when people actually want to use it. The family that built the \$50,000 outdoor kitchen uses it on weekends in October. The couple that installed the pool looks at it from the kitchen window after dark.

An outdoor space without lighting is a room with the *lights off*. Beautiful in daylight. Invisible the rest of the time.

What proper lighting actually does

It turns a 6-hour room into a 14-hour room. It makes the pool the focal point of the yard instead of a dark rectangle. It makes Tuesday night dinner on the patio feel like a Saturday night out. It's the difference between *having* an outdoor living space and *using* one.

Zones, not *floodlights*.

The single biggest difference between amateur and professional outdoor lighting is the idea of **zones**. A professionally designed system lights the space the way an interior designer lights a room — in layers, by function, never with a single fixture trying to do everything.

1

Task

Where people do things. Grilling, dining, pool steps, pathways. Needs to be bright enough to function — but never harsh.

2

Ambient

The warm fill that makes a space feel like a space. Uplighting on foliage, wall washes, bistro lights. The baseline atmosphere.

3

Accent

The dramatic layer. Moonlit specimen trees. Featured columns. Sculptural plantings. What makes people stop and look.

4

Safety

Path lights, step lights, subtle markers. Prevents twisted ankles on the way to the firepit. Never the dominant layer.

5

Feature

Water features, fire features, art, statement architecture. Each gets its own dedicated fixture and scene.

6

Architectural

The house itself. Columns, facades, rooflines, entryways. Ties the outdoor room back to the home.

THE PRINCIPLE

Never light the whole space with one fixture. Instead, layer multiple zones, each at the right intensity. When all six layers work together, the eye reads "finished room" — not "yard with floodlight."

The dining zone: how to light a patio *table*.

Dining outside is the single most common reason homeowners want lighting — and also the most commonly gotten wrong. The mistake is almost always the same: people try to light the table itself. The goal is to light *everything around it*.



Warm 2700K color temperature

Candlelight warmth. Flatters skin tones, makes food look its best, reads as "home" not "hospital." Never blue-white, never above 3000K.



Light the perimeter, not the table

Uplighting on nearby trees, wall washes on house-facing walls, subtle downlights tucked under eaves. The dining area becomes the darkest part of the room — and the most inviting.



Bistro lights for vertical ambiance

Strung overhead between posts, pergolas, or trees. Creates the warm ceiling every outdoor restaurant in Europe figured out a century ago. Low wattage, high impact.



Dimming on every fixture

Dinner for two is a different light level than dinner for twelve. A system without dimming controls is a system you'll fight against every time you use it.



Never: a single overhead floodlight

Creates harsh shadows on faces. Makes food look gray. Announces to neighbors that dinner is happening. The opposite of ambiance.

Pools, spas, and *water features*.

Water is the most dramatic element in any outdoor living space — and also the most under-supported by what surrounds it. A pool with built-in lights, set against a dark backyard, looks like a glowing rectangle floating in the void.

A note on what's in the water

In-pool and in-spa lighting is its own discipline, handled by the pool builder when the pool is constructed. We don't install fixtures inside the pool itself. What we do — and what most pools and spas are missing — is the lighting that surrounds the water and gives it context.

Surrounding the water

The fixtures *around* the pool are what transform it from a dark rectangle into the centerpiece of the back yard. Uplighting on specimen palms or magnolias behind the pool creates the reflections that catch on the surface. Pathway lights from the house to the pool prevent the midnight stubbed-toe. Hardscape lighting integrated into coping, steps, and seat walls ties the pool back to the patio and removes the visual edge.

A well-surrounded pool stops being a pool after dark. It becomes the *centerpiece* of the entire back yard.

Water walls, fountains, and spas

Water features outside the pool itself are where we do the most work. Integrated low-voltage strip lighting along the top edge of a water wall, washing down across the falling water. Accent fixtures aimed at fountain housings from below. Ambient lighting around a spa that makes the surrounding patio feel like a destination — even when the spa itself isn't in use.

Firepits, outdoor fireplaces, and the *gathering* layer.

Fire features are the most primal draw in any outdoor space. The design instinct around them is usually wrong — people want to light the firepit itself, which kills the thing that makes it beautiful. The goal is the exact opposite.

Let the fire be the light

The flame *is* the lighting feature. Any other fixture pointed directly at a firepit or fireplace competes with the flame and flattens it. The job of the surrounding lighting is to make the **space around the fire** readable — the seating, the paths, the walls — without ever drawing attention away from the flame itself.

What to light, and how



Low, warm perimeter lighting

Small downlights or step lights around the seating area — just enough to see faces and drinks, never bright enough to wash out the fire's glow.



Hardscape lighting in stone or seat walls

Integrated low-voltage strips tucked under coping, seat walls, or outdoor fireplace mantels. Provides ambient glow without any visible fixtures.



Accent lighting on the chimney or feature wall

If there's an outdoor fireplace with architectural mass, light it from below with narrow beam spreads — the fireplace becomes a sculpture when the fire is out.



Never: floodlights aimed at the fire

Kills the magic entirely. The flame looks dull. The scene reads as a fire in a parking lot.

Trees, hardscape, and the *architectural* layer.

Once the functional zones are handled, the last layer is what transforms an outdoor space from "lit well" to "genuinely beautiful." This is the layer most homeowners don't know they want until they see it done right — and then can't imagine the yard without it.

Moonlighting

Fixtures installed high in the canopy of large trees, aimed downward. Light filters through branches the way moonlight does on a clear night — dappled, soft, organic. For Louisiana homeowners with live oaks, pecans, or large magnolias on the property, this is the single most dramatic lighting decision you can make. People stop in the street.

Specimen tree uplighting

The opposite technique, and equally powerful. Wide-beam brass fixtures at the base of feature trees, washing the trunk and canopy from below. Every interesting tree in the yard becomes a sculpture. Palms, cypresses, crepe myrtles, Japanese maples — each lights differently and each deserves consideration.

Hardscape glow

Low-voltage lighting integrated directly into stonework, seat walls, coping, steps, and walkways. Invisible during the day, quietly beautiful at night. Ties the whole landscape together and makes navigating the space effortless.

Architectural lighting on the home

Uplighting on columns, washing against facades, accent on dormers or gables. The house itself becomes part of the outdoor living experience — not a dark wall behind the patio, but a backdrop that frames everything else. For historic Louisiana homes, this is where proper lighting earns its place.

Sound and light: the *full* atmosphere.

Every outdoor living space reaches a ceiling with lighting alone. To take a space from "beautifully lit" to "genuinely experiential," there's one more layer — and it's the one most homeowners haven't considered until they hear a properly designed system for the first time.

Integrated outdoor audio

Professional outdoor speakers — not patio Bluetooth bricks, not the kitchen radio propped in a window. Weatherproof speakers integrated into the landscape, hidden in plantings or tucked under eaves, with no visible wires and no ugly boxes on the wall. Wired into the same control system as the lighting, so sound and light come up together as a single experience.

Light gives the space form. Sound gives it *soul*. The two together are what make a backyard feel like a destination.

Game day, date night, party mode

The same technology that runs the lighting scenes can trigger the audio. "Game day" becomes a single tap — purple and gold lighting comes up, the Saints pregame fills the patio. "Date night" — warm amber scene, 2700K dimmed to 20%, dinner playlist.

Scenes, control, and the system that *runs* it all.

A great outdoor living system runs on **scenes** — preset combinations of light levels, colors, zones, and audio that you name once and trigger with a tap. Here are the scenes our clients actually use, most nights of the year.

THE DEFAULT

Welcome Home

Warm 2700K across the facade, path lights, accent uplighting on the front oaks. The scene that runs automatically every night at dusk — your home already looking finished when you pull in the driveway.

MOST USED

Dinner Tonight

Perimeter warm fill, bistro lights on at 60%, pool dimmed to ambient, audio on the dining patio zone only. The weeknight dinner scene that makes every Tuesday feel worth dressing up for.

ENTERTAINING

Party Mode

Full ambient layer, pool on color-shifting cycle, hardscape glow, audio balanced across all zones. The scene that makes people text their friends pictures from your backyard.

SEASONAL

Game Day / Holiday

Color-changing scenes tied to the calendar. Purple and gold for Saints games. Red, white, and blue for the 4th. Red and green for Christmas. Scheduled to trigger automatically on the days that matter.

THE QUIET ONE

Late Night

Most zones off, minimum safety path lights, firepit area at low warm glow, everything else dark. The scene for a quiet last drink before bed, when the rest of the house has already turned in.

ALL OFF

Away

Security pattern only — minimal exterior lighting that rotates randomly to suggest occupancy. Active whenever the system knows you're not home.

— A NOTE FROM THE TEAM

You already built the *space.* Let's make it **come alive.**

If you're reading this, you've probably already invested in the rest of the outdoor living experience — the patio, the pool, the outdoor kitchen, the landscape. You didn't cut corners on any of it.

Outdoor lighting is the finishing layer on everything you've already built. Done right, it turns all of those investments into a space your family actually uses every night of the year — not just the afternoons you can catch between work and sunset.

We'd be honored to walk your property and show you what's possible. Consultations are free, include a full design conversation, and come with no expectation. We've designed systems for homes across the Northshore — from Covington to Mandeville to Slidell to Ponchatoula — and every single one starts the same way: a walk around the property, looking at what's there and what could be.

Melissa & Jonathan Kujawski

READY TO SEE IT

Book a *free* design
consultation.

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(985) 244-7733