

— LIT OUTDOOR LIGHTING

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

The Christmas Lights

Planning Guide

*What every homeowner should
know before November.*

A timeline, a budget, and the questions most installers
hope you'll skip.

NO SALES PITCH
JUST THE REAL CALENDAR

WELCOME

By the time most people think about Christmas, we're *already* booked.



Every year, the same thing happens. Someone calls us the first week of November asking if we can light their home for the holidays. And every year, we have to tell them no — because our calendar filled up in September.

This guide exists so that doesn't happen to you.

There's nothing complicated about professional Christmas lighting. But the timing matters more than almost anything else, and very few installers are upfront about it. This guide walks through the real calendar, the costs, the design choices that matter, and the questions most companies hope you'll skip.

Our promise to you

Nothing in this guide is a pitch. If you read it, take notes, and hire a different company — or decide to DIY — you'll still end up with a better result than if you'd gone in blind. That's the whole point.

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What's *inside*

Eight chapters on planning Christmas lighting — starting with the only one that can't be fixed later: timing.

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PLUS — 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY CHRISTMAS LIGHT INSTALLER

01 CHAPTER ONE · THE CALENDAR

The calendar you should *actually* follow.

Most homeowners think about Christmas lights in November. By then, it's too late. Here's when the work really needs to happen — from both sides of the phone.

| | | |
|------------------|----------|--|
| <i>Jan – May</i> | PLAN | Save photos and ideas. Think through what worked last year and what didn't. |
| <i>June</i> | IDEAL | Best availability all year. Priority booking for returning customers opens. Call now for any window you want. |
| <i>July</i> | IDEAL | Still wide open. Consultations are quick, installers aren't stressed, and scheduling is flexible. |
| <i>August</i> | GOOD | Solid options but narrowing. Popular install windows (early November) start getting picked up. |
| <i>September</i> | CLOSING | Calendars fill fast. Most reputable installers are 60–80% booked by end of month. |
| <i>October</i> | LATE | Install season begins. New customers often go on waitlists. Quality installers stop taking calls. |
| <i>November</i> | TOO LATE | Whoever's still answering is likely the company you didn't want. Scrambling begins. |
| <i>December</i> | ENJOY | Lights on. The season begins. Takedown gets scheduled for early January. |

*If you take away one thing from this guide, let it be this: **call in summer.** Everything gets easier from there.*

What "professional" *actually* includes.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

You get three quotes for Christmas lights. One is \$800. One is \$2,400. One is \$4,200. You assume the \$800 one is a steal. Usually, it isn't — the quotes are for three very different products.

— WHY IT MATTERS

A full Christmas lighting service should include a lot more than someone climbing a ladder once. The real package is: **custom-cut lights** made to fit your specific rooflines, the **install** itself, at least one **mid-season maintenance visit** (things break — the wind, squirrels, power), **takedown** after the holidays, and **climate-controlled storage** of your lights in the off-season. Budget installers often skip the back half of that list — then charge for each piece separately when something goes wrong.

— WHAT TO LOOK FOR INSTEAD

A single quote that clearly includes **install + mid-season service + takedown + storage**. If any of those four aren't in writing, assume they aren't included. A bare install is almost always cheaper — but you're paying for it in time and stress when a strand fails on Christmas Eve.

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CHAPTER THREE

The real cost of doing it *yourself*.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The spreadsheet says DIY is cheaper. \$300 for lights at the big-box store. Free labor if you put them up yourself. Seems like a no-brainer. The truth is closer to the opposite.

— WHY IT MATTERS

The spreadsheet leaves out a lot: the **12 to 20 hours** a medium-sized home takes to install and take down; the injury risk (falls from ladders spike every December and are one of the leading causes of ER visits for adult men in the U.S.); the garage or attic space your lights will eat all year; the **2–3 season lifespan** of big-box strands before the wiring fails or bulbs corrode; and the fact that half of what you put up on Black Friday is often dark by Christmas week.

"Most DIY setups end up costing more than a professional install by year three — once you factor in replacements, time, and the strand that always fails in December."

— WHAT TO CONSIDER

If you value your time at anything above minimum wage, and you're lighting more than a doorway, run the numbers honestly. Most homeowners find the math flips fast — especially once you add professional-grade lights that actually last.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Light quality: good *vs.* cheap.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Every Christmas light looks the same online. White is white. Warm is warm. They're strings of bulbs — how different can they actually be? More different than you'd think.

— WHY IT MATTERS

Commercial-grade LED Christmas lights use **sealed sockets** (water can't get in), **solid copper wire** (doesn't corrode), and **individually replaceable bulbs**. Big-box lights use injection-molded plastic with glued-in bulbs — when one fails, the whole strand goes dark, and there's nothing you can do but throw it away. Good lights also come in a **true 2700K warm white** that reads like candlelight. Cheap "warm white" usually runs blue-ish on camera and cold in person.

— WHAT TO LOOK FOR INSTEAD

Ask directly: are these **commercial-grade**? Are the bulbs **individually replaceable**? What's the **color temperature** in Kelvin? A professional installer will know all three answers in under thirty seconds — and use **C9 bulbs** for rooflines, **C7 or mini lights** for trees.

05 CHAPTER FIVE

Where to light — and where to *stop*.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

You want to light everything. Every bush, every eave, every pathway, every tree, every wreath. More is more, right? Not quite.

— WHY IT MATTERS

The homes that look best at Christmas follow a simple principle: **one strong roofline + one to three accent features** (a specimen tree, a wreath, a lit path). Homes with lights on every surface look busy and washed out, and they lose their architectural shape. Great Christmas lighting is editing, not maximalism — the restraint is what makes the lit elements actually *feel* lit.

— WHAT TO PRIORITIZE

In order of impact: **rooflines** (biggest visual payoff, hardest to DIY), **one standout tree** (typically a specimen visible from the street), and a **front entry accent** (wreath, garland, or doorway lighting). Skip: lighting every shrub, pathway stakes that fight your permanent lights, and competing color schemes in the same sightline.

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CHAPTER SIX

Storage, takedown, and the *full season.*

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

You sign a contract with what feels like a fair price. Then the bulbs start flickering mid-December and you find out replacements aren't included. A strand stops working — that's a service call. The all-in price you signed for keeps quietly growing every time something fails.

— WHY IT MATTERS

A Christmas lighting season is six weeks of weather, wind, branches, and constant on-off cycles. Bulbs will fail. Strands will get nicked. Squirrels will chew. None of that is your fault — and none of it should turn into a separate invoice. What happens to your lights **between** seasons matters too: lights crammed in an attic or shed with no climate control degrade significantly faster, and a properly labeled, climate-stored set of lights is what makes year-two installs go smoothly.

— WHAT TO LOOK FOR INSTEAD

A truly **all-inclusive price**, with no hidden add-ons throughout the season. Burned-out bulbs and broken strands replaced **at no extra charge** for the duration of the season. **Climate-controlled storage** between seasons, included. Takedown handled on the company's calendar, not yours. The price you sign for in October should be the only price you pay until the lights come down in January.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

What it *actually* costs.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

You Google "Christmas light installation cost" and get wildly different numbers — \$400 to \$10,000 and beyond. You have no idea where you fit.

— WHY THE RANGE IS SO WIDE

Pricing depends on four things: **linear feet of roofline**, the **height and complexity** of your roof (multiple peaks, dormers, second stories), the **number of additional features** lit (trees, archways, wreaths), and whether the quote includes **maintenance, takedown, and storage**. A single-story ranch with 80 feet of roofline is a very different job from a three-story home with dormers and specimen trees.

— WHERE MOST HOMES LAND

For most homes in our service area, a full-service Christmas lighting package runs **\$1,500–\$3,500** (install + maintenance + takedown + storage). Larger or more complex homes land at **\$3,500–\$7,000+**. Smaller packages — just the roofline on a single-story home — can run **\$800–\$1,200**.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Red flags specific to *Christmas* installers.

— WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Christmas light installation is a seasonal gold rush. Every October, new operators pop up — handyman services, landscapers, movers, even guys with a pickup and a ladder — adding "Christmas lights" to their list for three months. Come February, they're gone.

— WHY IT MATTERS

When a light goes out on December 22nd, you want to call a company that picks up. Seasonal operators disappear the minute the holidays end. They also tend to use **whatever lights they can source cheaply**, which means no guarantees on quality and no consistency year-to-year. A crew that installs Christmas lights only three months a year has little incentive to invest in the best materials — or in the training it takes to do this well.

"You'll learn more about a Christmas light installer from what they're doing in July than from anything they tell you in October."

— WHAT TO LOOK FOR INSTEAD

A company whose **primary business is lighting year-round** — not a handyman who adds Christmas to the list. A clear answer on what happens if a light fails mid-season. And the **same crew installing your lights every year** — that's how quality stays consistent.

Ten questions to ask *any* Christmas light installer.

*Print this, bring it to your consultations, and write down their answers.
The right company welcomes all ten.*

- 01** When does your installation calendar typically close for the season?
- 02** What's included in your quote — install only, or install + maintenance + takedown + storage?
- 03** What happens if a light fails on December 22nd? Who do I call?
- 04** Are the lights commercial-grade or residential-grade?
- 05** What color temperature are your white lights? (It should be 2700K.)
- 06** Where are my lights stored in the off-season?
- 07** Is the price all-inclusive, or are replacement bulbs and strands billed separately?
- 08** How long have you been installing Christmas lights specifically?
- 09** Can I see photos of homes you've lit in my area?
- 10** What's your guarantee, and what exactly does it cover?

— A NOTE FROM OUR TEAM

When you're ready — and now's the *right time.*

We started Lit Outdoor Lighting in 2021, and Christmas has grown into one of the things our customers count on us for. Outdoor lighting is all we do — which means in February, when the seasonal installers have all disappeared, we're still here. Designing, installing, maintaining, and answering the phone.

If you're thinking about Christmas lighting for this year, now is the right time to start the conversation. Our calendar fills up by September. The early-install windows — the ones before the season rush — go to customers who call before July.

Consultations are free. We walk your home, measure for custom-cut lights, talk through what's possible, and give you a clear quote. No pressure, no pitch.



Melissa & Jonathan

READY TO PLAN

Book a *free* consultation.

CALL OR TEXT

(985) 244-7733