LIT OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Louisiana, since 2021

The Louisiana Homeowner's

Guide to *Outdoor* Lighting

Humidity, hurricanes, live oaks, historic homes — and everything else that makes lighting here different.

A REGIONAL GUIDE · WRITTEN BY LOUISIANA INSTALLERS

WELCOME

Louisiana lighting isn't like lighting *anywhere else*.

Humidity degrades fixtures you'd get a decade out of anywhere else. Hurricane winds rip strands loose at 60 mph. Live oaks cast shadows that need their own design approach. Historic homes have wiring older than any warranty covers. And entertaining outside isn't a summer novelty here — it's a year-round way of life.

We started Lit Outdoor Lighting in 2021 to serve Louisiana homeowners specifically. This guide distills what we've learned from hundreds of installs across the state — what works, what doesn't, and why so much of what you'll read about outdoor lighting online simply doesn't apply here.

You can read this cover-to-cover, or jump to the chapter closest to your situation. Either way, the goal is the same: you walk away knowing enough about Louisiana outdoor lighting to make a confident decision — whether you hire us, hire someone else, or tackle pieces of it yourself.

> ***A note on who this is for***
>
> This guide was written for Louisiana homes. If you live elsewhere, most of it still applies — but the specifics on humidity ratings, hurricane prep, and live oak canopies were built around what we deal with here every day.

CONTENTS

Eight chapters *on lighting here*.

Written from years of installing on Louisiana properties — from Garden District galleries to bayou back porches.

Plus — a regional style guide from New Orleans to Shreveport.

CHAPTER I

What Louisiana humidity *actually* does to outdoor lighting.

Louisiana averages **75% humidity year-round**, with summer readings above 90% common. Add 100°F heat, salt air within 50 miles of the coast, violent thunderstorms that push voltage spikes through residential wiring, and the year-round presence of termites willing to chew through cable jackets, and you have a climate that's especially unkind to outdoor lighting.

Most fixtures sold at big-box stores are designed for a generic American climate. Generic doesn't exist here. What lasts a decade in Colorado or California will often fail within three seasons in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, or Metairie.

Why standard fixtures fail

Aluminum fixtures corrode within 2 to 3 seasons — the humidity seeps into every unsealed seam. Cheap plastic housings brittle under UV in a single summer, then crack at the first cold snap. Non-sealed sockets fill slowly with condensation and short out. Even "outdoor-rated" fixtures at a $30 price point are typically using gaskets that rot, seals that lose elasticity, and finishes that dull within a year.

> *"If a fixture's spec sheet doesn't mention humidity, it wasn't designed with us in mind."*

What actually lasts here

Cast brass or solid copper fixtures. **IP65 or higher** ingress-protection ratings. Marine-grade wire where properties sit near the Gulf. Silicone gaskets (not rubber, not foam). Porcelain sockets sealed against moisture. These cost more. They also last ten years instead of three.

FIELD NOTE

We've replaced systems in Mandeville that were installed in 2018 and already failing — aluminum fixtures, rubber gaskets, and a transformer mounted at ground level. The homeowner paid twice for the same system.

CHAPTER II

Hurricane-ready *installation*.

Hurricane season runs June through November — nearly half the year. Even tropical storms that don't make landfall bring 50 to 70 mph gusts across much of the state. A lighting system that hasn't been built for that kind of wind is a liability: **loose strands become whipping hazards**, cheap fixtures become projectiles, and transformer damage from storm surge can cost more than the original install.

Built for wind from day one

Fixtures should be **screwed** into the substrate, not clipped or taped. Strands should have additional anchor points every 18 to 24 inches along rooflines, not just at corners. Any freestanding fixtures (path lights, tree spots) should have stakes driven deeper than they look like they need. And transformers should be mounted at least 18 inches off the ground — ideally higher if your property has ever flooded.

A simple pre-storm move

When a named storm enters the Gulf, the right move is also the easiest one: **walk to the transformer and unplug it.** That cuts power to the entire system in seconds. After the storm passes, leave it unplugged until everything has fully dried out — usually a day or two — then plug back in. A properly installed system should function at full capacity once it's dry.

What breaks, and why

After a hurricane, we typically see four failures: water infiltration through unsealed connections (#1 by a wide margin), wind damage to lightweight aluminum or plastic fixtures, surge damage to transformers not protected by a whole-house surge protector, and saltwater corrosion on any exposed copper or steel within ten miles of the coast.

CHAPTER III

Moonlighting live oaks — the *Louisiana* technique.

If your property has a live oak — especially one 80 years old or older — it's likely the single most dramatic element you can light. The technique for doing it well is called **moonlighting**, and it's specific to trees with expansive canopies, which Louisiana has in unusual abundance.

What moonlighting actually is

Fixtures are installed **high in the canopy** — typically 25 to 40 feet up — and aimed *downward* through the branches. Light filters through leaves and Spanish moss the way moonlight does on a clear night. Done well, the effect is ethereal. Done poorly, it's a flashlight in a tree. The difference is almost entirely about fixture placement, beam angle, and color temperature.

> *"A well-moonlit oak stops people in the street. It's the single most powerful lighting decision on most Louisiana properties."*

The Louisiana-specific considerations

Live oaks here are often **150+ years old** and protected by local ordinance. Any installation method must avoid nails, screws into the trunk, or strap pressure that will injure the cambium as the tree grows. Spanish moss — beautiful and iconic — also creates movement that most lighting designs don't account for; subtle motion means the light has to be **even**, not spotty, or the moss flicker looks wrong.

Wiring through a large live oak canopy is its own problem. The branches flex significantly in wind. Cables need **slack loops** engineered in, strain relief at each fixture, and cable clips that release before they damage bark.

FIELD NOTE

The best Garden District moonlighting we've installed takes three people a full day on a single tree. Most cheap install quotes assume thirty minutes.

CHAPTER IV

Lighting historic homes: *Garden District to shotgun*.

Louisiana's housing stock is architecturally distinct. Greek Revival plantations. Creole cottages. Shotgun houses. Queen Anne Victorians. Italianate mansions in the Garden District. Each has its own language, and a lighting design that fights the architecture always looks wrong.

Garden District & Uptown New Orleans

Ornate 19th-century homes with wrought iron galleries, heavy columns, and deep front porches. The fixture vocabulary here is **historic** — oil-rubbed bronze, aged copper, gaslight reproductions. Modern fixtures look alien against these facades. Light the columns from below, the oaks out front as described in the previous chapter, and resist the urge to light everything.

Creole cottages & shotguns

Lower, narrower, often set right up against the sidewalk. Lighting has to respect the intimate scale — small path lights, warm 2700K color temperature, downlighting under eaves rather than blasting the facade. Many of these homes sit in historic districts with strict architectural review, so fixture choice often needs pre-approval. Know the rules for your district before quoting.

Antebellum & plantation-style

Wide wrap-around porches, classical columns, formal landscaping. These homes call for **symmetry** in the lighting design — what you do on the left side of the front should mirror the right. Pecan trees, magnolias, and large azaleas often frame these properties and deserve their own feature lighting.

FIELD NOTE

Homes in the Lower Garden District routinely require approval from the HDLC before exterior fixture changes. Budget three weeks for review.

CHAPTER V

Pools, patios, and *mosquito-aware* lighting.

Louisiana outdoor living is **nine or ten months a year**. That's not a minor detail — it means your patio and pool lighting get four times the use of the same setup in most of the country. Systems have to be designed for that kind of load.

Patio dining

The single biggest mistake is lighting *at* the table instead of *around* it. Direct overhead light creates glare on faces and washes out the food. The goal is ambient light from multiple low sources — uplighting on nearby foliage, small downlights tucked under the eave, warm 2700K wall sconces on house-facing walls. Never blue-white (4000K+); it reads like a hospital cafeteria.

Pools

Pool lighting is partly functional (safety, being able to see the steps) and partly atmospheric. In-pool fixtures should be on a separate circuit from the landscape lighting, with their own GFCI. Surrounding tree and deck lighting should be warm and **lower wattage** than the pool light — otherwise the pool itself stops being the focal point.

The mosquito question

Most outdoor light *does* attract insects, but the effect is dramatically different by color temperature. Warm 2700K attracts noticeably fewer bugs than cooler whites. True amber or yellow "bug lights" attract the fewest of all — but they also look jaundiced on everything they hit, so use them only in utility areas, never entertainment zones. The real mosquito solution is spacing and air movement; lights are downstream of that.

FIELD NOTE

We've never had a client ask for cooler-temperature outdoor lighting after seeing the 2700K option on their own property.

CHAPTER VI

Installing on wet ground and *flood-prone* yards.

Standing water in a yard is normal in much of Louisiana. So is the six-inch rain event that puts half an inch of water across the entire lawn for twenty-four hours. Any lighting system that isn't designed for that reality has a short life.

Transformer placement

Transformers should **never sit at grade** in Louisiana. Minimum 18 inches off the ground, ideally 24 or more. If your property has ever flooded — even sheet flooding — consider mounting on the wall of the house under a soffit or eave. A transformer soaked in floodwater is a total loss.

Wire burial and splices

Minimum 6 inches of burial depth, with all splices elevated off the ground in waterproof junction boxes. Direct-bury connectors without a weatherproof enclosure will fail within a year here — we see it constantly. Moisture wicks along copper wire inside the insulation, finds an opening, and corrodes.

Fixture base drainage

In-ground fixtures need drainage *around* their bases. Water that pools against a fixture seeps into the lens housing, then freezes on the rare cold night, cracks the housing, and kills the fixture. A handful of pea gravel under each fixture base, extending four inches below the fixture, solves this entirely.

"If your yard has ever held water for longer than six hours, design the lighting for it."

FIELD NOTE

After the 2016 Baton Rouge floods, most rebuilt systems we've inspected had the transformer moved up — but splices left buried. Those failed.

CHAPTER VII

The only fixture materials that *survive* down here.

Spec sheets don't always tell the truth about Louisiana. A fixture rated for "humid climates" in a Midwest lab is not the same as a fixture tested in coastal Louisiana. Here's what actually holds.

Cast brass — the default

15 to 25 year lifespan, develops a natural living patina that ages gracefully. Handles humidity, salt air, freeze-thaw cycles, and direct sun without meaningful degradation. Expensive up front; the longevity math works every time.

Copper — for character

Similar longevity to brass. Develops a beautiful verdigris patina — a muted blue-green — that pairs especially well with Garden District and other historic architecture. Copper is the right answer when aesthetics matter.

Aluminum — be careful

Marine-grade aluminum with a proper powder coat can last. Standard-grade aluminum fails fast, especially within 30 miles of the coast where chlorides accelerate corrosion. If someone is selling you aluminum in Houma or Grand Isle, ask for the alloy.

Stainless — not as good as you'd think

Sounds perfect on paper. In practice, Louisiana humidity plus coastal salt causes **tea staining** and pitting within two to three years on most residential stainless grades. 316 marine-grade holds up, but the cost approaches brass without the aesthetic advantages.

Plastic / resin — avoid

UV plus heat cycling plus humidity destroys plastic fixtures in two to three seasons. Save money now, spend it again in four years.

FIELD NOTE

We have brass fixtures from our earliest installs — pushing five years in humid suburban neighborhoods — that have not needed a single part replacement.

CHAPTER VIII

Finding a Louisiana *lighting specialist*.

Hiring a lighting installer who doesn't know Louisiana is like hiring a roofer who's never seen a hurricane. The work might look fine in October. By July of the following year, you'll know what was missing in the quote.

Questions to ask every quote

How many Louisiana installs have you done in the last year? Numbers matter. A company doing two a month is dabbling. A company doing twenty has seen the patterns.

What fixture material do you use, and why? If "aluminum" is the answer and your property is near the coast, keep looking. The right answer involves brass or copper and specifics about gaskets.

Walk me through your hurricane protocol. They should have one. If the answer is vague, the install wasn't built for winds.

Are you familiar with [my historic district]? If you're in a designated district, the answer has to be yes — or they need to be willing to learn before quoting.

How do you handle drainage and flooding around fixtures? The answer should involve elevated splices, transformer height, and drainage under inground lights.

Red flags specific to this state

Aluminum fixtures recommended within 50 miles of the Gulf. No wind-load conversation anywhere in the quote. Unfamiliarity with live oak or specimen tree lighting technique. Quotes given without an in-person site visit — drainage patterns, flood lines, and tree canopy density aren't visible from photos. Transformer spec that doesn't include mounting height.

FIELD NOTE

The best way to evaluate a Louisiana installer: ask to see a job they installed four years ago. Drive by. If it still looks clean, they know what they're doing.

A REGIONAL ATLAS

Louisiana, lit *by region*.

The state isn't one climate or one architectural tradition. A lighting design that works in the Garden District would feel wrong in Shreveport, and what suits a Lafayette Acadian cottage doesn't translate to a Lake Charles coastal home.

New Orleans & Garden District

Historic fixture vocabulary: oil-rubbed bronze, copper, gaslight reproductions. Emphasis on **wrought iron integration** and uplighting on columns. Live oaks call for moonlighting. HDLC review for historic districts. Flood-ready transformer placement essential throughout low-lying neighborhoods.

Baton Rouge

Mix of historic neighborhoods (Spanish Town, Garden District) and post-war suburban. Large live oaks common in older neighborhoods. Lighting language often **traditional rather than ornate**. Watch for flood zones near the river and older faubourgs.

Lafayette & Acadiana

Smaller historic cottages, Acadian architecture, agricultural properties common on the outskirts. Warmer, more traditional lighting language. Humidity here is as high as anywhere in the state — **brass or copper only**, with transformer placement a priority.

Lake Charles & SW Louisiana

Coastal. Salt air plus humidity means **marine-grade brass is non-negotiable**. Hurricane exposure is the highest in the state — wind-load redundancy on every fixture. Rebuilding from Laura and Delta is still shaping the residential design landscape.

Shreveport & NW Louisiana

Lower humidity. Actual freezes some winters. Pine woodlands instead of live oaks. The lighting approach shifts toward **cooler-feeling warm whites** and more vertical architectural lighting. Less hurricane pressure, more tornado consideration.

Houma, Thibodaux, and the Bayou

Water everywhere. Ground saturation is the default. Elevated everything — transformers, splices, pathway fixtures. Salt intrusion from nearby Gulf water tables eats any fixture not spec'd for **marine environments**.

A NOTE FROM THE TEAM

Louisiana lighting, *done right*.

We started Lit Outdoor Lighting in 2021 to serve Louisiana homeowners specifically. Every install we do is built for what this state throws at lighting systems: the humidity, the storms, the trees that have stood through twenty hurricanes, the historic homes that deserve fixtures worthy of their age.

This guide is our attempt to share what we've learned. Use it to pick the right professional — ours or someone else's. Louisiana homeowners deserve lighting designed for Louisiana, not generic advice built for someone else's climate.

If you'd like to see what your property could look like, we'd love to walk it with you. Consultations are free, include a night demo on request, and come with no expectation that you'll hire us.

Melissa & Jonathan

SCHEDULE A SITE VISIT

Book a *free* Louisiana consultation.

CALL OR TEXT

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