



# Enlightening Your Customers

Selecting the right accent lights can really enhance an outdoor setting.

Shedding some light on outdoor accent lighting products may translate to increased sales.

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**M**any people feel there aren't enough hours in a day to spend in the garden or out on the patio. But they can extend the time they spend outdoors with unique accent lighting products that also will help light up your garden center's sales. You can help point customers toward the right types of products if you know how they intend to use them.

Education, creativity and innovative displays can help highlight these products in your garden center and lead your customers to make enlightened purchases.

## Accent On Light

Accenting the garden or patio with creative lighting products can add a touch of sophistication or create an air of fun and whimsy. Accent lighting can spotlight or soften the details of an outdoor area and mean the difference between refined and relaxed or festive, fun and funky.

The right lighting products can help define outdoor spaces or create intriguing shadows and silhouettes. Accent lighting can be functional, romantic and artistic. It can basically be whatever it needs to be as long as it is done right — this is why an edu-

cated sales force is so important. Your staff can help customers make lighting decisions if they know how the products work and what they can do.

Knowing why a customer wants to illuminate his or her patio or garden will help determine what products will work best. Accent lighting should always complement the overall look and feel of the outdoor space. Using the wrong type of lighting may destroy the ambiance of the outdoor setting. For example, a cottage garden would be the perfect place for decorative, flower-shaped lights, and standard cup-shaped landscape lights would be more appropriate in a modern setting.

When customers are looking for accent lighting ideas, ask them, "What does the light need to do? Does it need to set a specific mood or create atmosphere? Are you trying to highlight the details of a certain area? Is light needed for safety reasons? To repel insects?" Also, ask customers where they want to put the lights. On an outdoor table? Around the edge of the patio or garden? Close to people or food or away from the patio's activities?

Once you know the answer to questions like these, you can steer shoppers toward the most appropriate products in your store.



String lighting is available in a wide variety of styles to meet your customers' needs.

### Choices, Choices, Choices

From kitschy to classy, accent lighting comes in all shapes, sizes, colors, materials and price points. Here is just a small sampling of the many different types of accent lighting that can help ignite your sales:

- Candles
- Lanterns
- String lighting
- Torches
- Votives/tea lights
- Light sculptures
- Umbrella lights
- Tabletop fire bowls
- Luminaria
- LED lighting

Candles, lanterns and string lighting are very popular choices for consumers. Because there are so many different products, consumers and retailers have many different options. The challenge is to find the right combination of accent lights for your customer.

**Candles.** Candles are probably the most popular type of outdoor accent lighting. It is important to know what kinds of candles your customers want to buy because the choices can be mind boggling. Candles can have multi-sensory appeal and multiple functions. They look and smell great and provide an inviting ambiance, all while performing other functions. For example, citronella candles create atmosphere while eliminating atmosphere-killing pests, and floating candles will light up a birdbath or pond and make "water hazards" a little bit safer.

**String lighting.** String lighting is another great way to light up the outdoors. These lights can be placed in trees, around railings, along walkways or on patio umbrellas. String lighting is available in a multitude of styles suitable for any type of function. Colorful novelty lights, elegant twinkling

lights or even old-fashioned Christmas lights are just some of the choices when it comes to string lighting.

**Lanterns.** There are many different lantern styles that can help accentuate a garden or patio. Tabletop lanterns can be used to light up food tables or located throughout the patio to help create a comfortable and appealing setting.

### Light Up Your Sales

Let the light (more specifically, the lack of light) work for your store. Once you have decided what types of accent lighting products are right for your garden center, it is time to let them do their thing by properly positioning them on the retail floor. Design a darkened outdoor display in your store to show how these products are intended to be used. This will help get customers thinking about their accent lighting needs.

Also, make sure you carry the most appropriate products. Because there are so many different products out there, you don't want to overwhelm your customers with too many options. It will just confuse them and actually may scare some away — and that is money out the door.

By putting the accent on accent lighting, your garden center can light up your sales while moving complementary products off of your shelves.

Remember, an enlightened customer can make your bottom line shine. 🌿

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